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TARGETS IN FRANCE

THE news that Rouen Cathedral, one of the finest in France, and with it much of the lovely city of Rouen has been badly damaged by a recent R.A.F. raid raises in an acute form the question whether our present bombing policy over occupied territory is wise or necessary. Given that there must be much incidental damage in preparing the way for invasion, is there any need to kill so many of our Allies in the process or to destroy cities and buildings of which every Frenchman—and European—is proud? Clearly the only justification would be that these operations are absolutely necessary for victory. No secondary military advantage would suffice.

April has witnessed the development of what Air Ministry spokesmen describe as a "new technique" in night-bombing. Belgium, and, still more, France have had to bear the brunt of the attack, which has been directed at railway centres. These are normally unremunerative targets: experience from all theatres of war goes to show that railways can be quickly repaired and that even direct hits on tracks cause only brief delays to traffic. But Bomber Command, we are told, has now overcome the problem of how to concentrate, within the few acres of a railway target, a weight of high explosive comparable with that allotted to Germany's large industrial centres. Obliteration, we are assured and can readily believe, is thus achieved.

If these tactics are to be pursued with persistence, it is important that the British public should at least appreciate their implication. We need not accept as accurate Vichy radio's version of the results: its accounts of hundreds of corpses in the suburban rail centres of Paris are in all probability much exaggerated; the propaganda motive is obvious. Remembering, however, the despatches of war correspondents who recently described the comparatively small proportion of bombs which fell within the area of the town of Cassino during an attack in clear daylight, we are bound to assume that night attacks on railway yards, scaled up to thousand-ton "obliteration" level, must involve very substantial casualties not merely to railway employees but in the whole neighbourhood.

In total war there is no place for emotional squeamishness. If purposes absolutely essential for victory can be attained only at the expense of heavy loss of lives, the price must be paid. But unless all sense of values is to be lost in a process of increasingly indiscriminate destruction, the Allied High Command must hold fast to some standard of proportion between cost and advantage. We are told that the purpose of these new R.A.F. night-operations is systematically to destroy not only locomotives but also the railway maintenance and repair shops on which the full efficiency of the enemy's system of western defences and communications depends.

In short, the air offensive by the R.A.F. against rail centres is designed, like the daylight bombing of enemy aircraft factories by the U.S. Strategic Air Force, as part of a war of attrition, whose peak of destruction we have probably yet to see. As such, it can achieve results in the long run indirectly helpful to invasion, in the sense that loss of locomotives and repair plants may weaken the enemy's ability to wage a prolonged campaign in the West. But it is difficult to believe that, even if damage surpasses the enemy's capacity to replace or make good, the partial denial of rearward rail facilities in a theatre so well supplied with roads could conceivably turn the scale for an assault on the Channel coast.

These are the factors which the British and American public must weigh before they endorse with their approval this "new technique" of aerial bombardment of railway centres by night. Few French and Belgian towns of any considerable size have no railway engine shops: the number of potential targets is immense. We do not avoid responsibility for dealing death wholesale to the populations promised liberation at our hands by protesting that the B.B.C. has warned French and Belgian civilians to remove themselves and their families from the neighbourhood of main railway junctions. Civilians even in England do not enjoy powers of mobility of the sort presumed: they are tied to their homes, their means of livelihood. French and Belgian non-combatants have the right to expect us to recognise this and to be correspondingly scrupulous in the use of our air power.

The Greek Crisis

A fortnight ago, with the appointment of Mr. Venizelos as Prime Minister and his declaration that he would seek to form an all-party Greek Government, it seemed as if there was a real chance that the breach between the resistance movement and the Cairo Cabinet might be closed. But behind the crisis that led to the resignation of Mr. Tsouderos there was more than the early reports made clear. And it is only with the announcement of the military and naval disorders in Egypt that the full implications of the present tragic position can be seen. There has long been unrest amongst the Greek forces who have been urging that the Government should be made really representative by the inclusion of members of the guerrilla groups, especially the E.A.M. This demand was backed by many officers, some of them holding high rank and by the Greek naval and merchant sailors and soldiers of the 1st Brigade. When Tsouderos resigned, the King appeared to accept this demand by charging Sophocles Venizelos with the task of forming a broader Cabinet. An amnesty for the mutineers was expected at the same time. But backed by the Foreign Office representative, Mr. Leeper, and, we suppose, by Mr. Churchill himself, King George demanded the unconditional surrender of the disaffected units. The 1st Brigade submitted—after it had been surrounded with British troops. The seamen had to be dealt with by force, and to do this the King employed Vice-Admiral Voulgaris; the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Alexandris, resigning rather than carry out the King's orders. Support for the resistance movement had to be eliminated before its delegates arrived from Greece for negotiations with Mr. Venizelos. This has been done by force. Now Mr. Venizelos has also resigned: his place is taken by Mr. Papandreou, imported from Greece by Tsouderos. No doubt to lend colour to King George's attempt to "broaden" his government,

Papandreou is alleged to be a Socialist. In fact he belongs to the Right Wing of the Venezelists. But the Political Committee inside Greece still has a word to say. It may follow the example of its neighbour, Marshal Tito. Or in the interests of unity, it may continue to seek an agreement. If the Allies really desire this, they must stop encouraging the truculent and reactionary King, and do their best to secure an amnesty for the mutineers.

The Italian Government

Marshal Badoglio's new administration seems to be a satisfactory and democratic solution to the wearying deadlock which had retarded both the social and economic recovery of Italy and the development of effective assistance to the Allied struggle to liberate the remainder of the country. The five Ministers without Portfolio will form a War Cabinet free of departmental duties, which should be capable of reaching agreement on important political issues. Whilst Croce and Sforza are included more for their intellectual qualities and moral influence than their organisational capacities, some of their colleagues, notably Togliatti and Mancini, the Socialist and Communist leaders, should be able to take a large share in the actual administration. The Socialist Mancini, who showed an unusual ability for reorganisation when he was nominated by Amgot as Prefect of Consenza, may prove to be one of the outstanding figures of the Italian liberation. And Togliatti has already shown by his part in the formation of the new Government that he has a keen sense of realities which will probably be a major asset to Italy in the difficult months to come. The other posts appear to have been distributed with considerable care both for party susceptibilities and for the abilities of the men concerned. We are particularly pleased to see that the Rector of Naples University has been given the task of rebuilding the educational system: he is a man of fine insight and feeling for the humanities and for the Italian tradition of scholarship. The next few weeks will be critical for democracy in Italy. The progressive parties have shown themselves to be shrewd critics; they will not find it so easy to work together for a creative purpose. They will encounter difficulties, have to surmount initial dissensions and maybe foreign pressure—but we hope it is not unduly optimistic to believe that Italian democracy is beginning to exist.

The Russians and the I.L.O.

It is not at all clear from the brief accounts so far telegraphed of *Izvestia's* article on the I.L.O. either what is meant or how far the article represents the official policy of the Soviet Union. *Izvestia* objects to the association of the I.L.O. with the League of Nations, and holds that it should be converted into or replaced by a United Nations organisation, excluding the Fascist countries. The article further suggests an increase in the workers' representation and a "democratic" broadening of the Executive. A good many people will agree that the I.L.O. would have been better off if it had not been tied to the League, and that after the war it will be better to have a separate body to deal with international labour questions, co-operating with but not subordinate to any political substitute for the League that may be set up. As for excluding the Fascist countries, it all depends on what is meant. It is to be hoped that after the war there will be no Fascist countries, and that the Russians do not mean permanently to exclude Germany and other States now under Fascist rule, even if their idea is to start with a body based exclusively on the United Nations.

Water

The Government's new water policy, announced in a White Paper last week, turns out to be no policy at all. It is all to the good that over £21 millions is to be provided for improving rural water supplies, and no doubt the effect will be to achieve a considerable improvement in a number of very ill-provided areas. It is also to the good that the Inland Water Survey, which has been allowed to languish, not merely during the war but ever since it was begun, is to be speeded up. What is not good is that the White Paper proposes to leave the existing huge number of separate water undertakings just as they are, apart from "encouraging" amalgamations, and makes no provision at all for any sort of national or regional authority to co-ordinate supplies and ensure more effective utilisation; In fact, the White Paper is neither more nor less than a re-hash of a document which has been in the pigeon-holes of the Ministry of Health for years, and is said to have been taken out and looked at with a view to possible action several times in the 'thirties—indeed, whenever there was a serious drought—and then put back. What is needed is a proper policy of regional organisation of water supplies under Regional Public Boards, co-ordinated by a National Water Commission with considerable powers to allocate reserves and to deal with land drainage as well as water supply—for at present one body may be busily pumping into the sea water which another body needs for the supply of industry or the public. These matters, one can only suppose, have been set aside as "controversial." About 80 per cent. of the water supply is already publicly controlled; but it would be much too controversial to do anything that would interfere with property rights in the odd 20 per cent.

Labour and Europe

This week, for the first time since it submerged itself into the Coalition, the Executive of the Labour Party has prepared for the annual Conference at Whitsuntide, a statement on the International Post-War Settlement. The document contains proposals that are useful and sensible, particularly on questions of economics and the rebuilding of common services for Europe. Its general remarks about world organisation go about as far as the average man without bold leadership is already prepared to go. The authors of the document have not appreciated this average man's desire for leadership. As we read we are conscious of a brooding anxiety lest the Labour Party should again suffer electorally from being called pro-German or pacifist or revolutionary. We doubt if the Labour Party is in any danger of being again wounded from any of these ancient arsenals of abuse. It is more likely to fade away from failure to convince millions who might be its supporters that it stands for anything substantially different from its opponents.

But there is something worse than conservatism and lack of inspiration in this document. It breaks sharply with the whole tradition of the party, which, if this document represents its views, has lost all sense that it belongs to an international movement. Its punitive proposals for Germany are those that are popularly discussed among non-socialists; there is no analysis of the forces within Germany, no recollection of past promises to anti-Nazi workers (such as Russia is now making, side by side with its organisation of the "Free German" movement), no appreciation of the fact that the reconstruction measures it discusses for Europe are dependent on the rebirth of a Germany with which the other European nations can live at peace. But this failure is much less surprising than the total absence of any reference to the resistance movements within occupied Europe. Not by a casual phrase is there as much as a hint of any interest in or sympathy with those popular movements which with incredible gallantry are preparing the way for military victory, and which must be the basis of any democratic future for Europe. The omission is the more remarkable in that Britain's attitude to these movements in Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, France and other countries is the substance of politics to-day; it is indeed to the Labour Party especially that the forces of democracy on the Continent have the right to look for aid against that return to Legitimism which is the aim of reaction in Washington and London as well as on the Continent. This Labour withdrawal from European politics—for it amounts to nothing less—will not pass without challenge at the Labour Party Conference. It raises far-reaching issues which we hope to discuss at greater length next week.

PARLIAMENT: Budget Apathy

Wednesday afternoon

THE Chancellor's mouth contains a rich purple plum, which yet does not impede his Scottish clarity of diction. Hansard breaks up his Budget speech with headlines, perhaps to make it seem readable. It was certainly dull to listen to, and attracted less than the traditional full House. Unsensational though it was, it still disquieted many Labour Members: even Tinker, leader "wild" of them, surmised that it "tended to back up private enterprise" and warned the Chancellor that "the spiral will continue"—that the adumbrated rise in the cost of living would be followed by demands for increased wages.

A House that was, however, unusually full for a Friday night heard the Prime Minister wind up the two-day debate on the Empire. Though his voice and manner are still tired, Mr. Churchill was once more in scintillating form and gracious mood; he seemed to have shed his recent irritability. He even described as "statesmanlike" (which they were) the speeches of three erstwhile thorns in his flesh—Shinwell, Hore-Belisha, and Winterton. In view of the forthcoming conference of Dominion Prime Ministers, he could make no new or important statement of Empire policy; but he contributed the valuable principle that there was no "inherent antagonism between a World Order to keep peace" and such lesser, but vast federal or other groupings as the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., and the British Commonwealth and Empire (as the Prime Minister always now calls it). He included also several rather touching intimacies, such as "I remember coming out of the Cabinet meeting on an August afternoon in 1914 . . . with this feeling: 'How are we to explain it all to Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand; nay, how are we to explain it all to our own people in the short time left? But, when we left the fierce controversy of the Cabinet room, and came out into the open air, the whole of the peoples of the British Empire . . . had already sprung to arms." There were also several frank and liberal references to Ireland. The note of mere jingoism intruded only once or twice in this memorable speech.

Stephen King-Hall initiated an interesting adjournment debate on War Savings propaganda much of which he described as "quite untrue" and "boloney." The people had been misled. "They do not understand that a greater service is done to the country by a child who gives up its consumption of sweets, of 6*d.* a week, than by a constituent of mine who proudly told me she had taken £100 out of the Post Office to buy guns by investing the money in War Saving certificates." Assheton, who has charm of manner but somewhat jejune material, gave an orthodox Treasury answer, but used the fact that he had not been given notice of this general criticism as a pretext for not dealing with it fully.

Eden disclosed at question-time that the Prime Minister himself had discussed the problem of the Jews in the Polish Forces with the Polish Prime Minister. He refused to agree to further transfers of Jewish soldiers to the British Army; the matter is to be debated again on Friday.

The eagerly awaited service pay announcement dwindled into a White Paper "taken in the day." The Prime Minister seemed once more sunk in gloom and fatigue—so much so that ebullient Davie Kirkwood shouted "Cheer up, Winnie. Don't be so broken-hearted," amid shocked cries of "Order."

PONTIFEX MINOR

POST-WAR MONEY:

The Second Thought

LORD KEYNES, Mr. White, and the rest of the monetary experts have thought again; and there are two ways of taking the product of their second thoughts. One way is to study the detail of what is now proposed, and attempt the difficult task of realistic interpretation of the complex clauses. That is a very needful process; but it is not what we propose to do now. It seems better, in the first instance, to discuss only the broader significance of the new draft, which is still carefully put forward as not committing either the British or the American Government, but obviously comes a good deal nearer to committing both of them than did the previous rival plans.

For here we have something agreed—if not by Governments, at all events by their chosen experts—something clearly meant to serve as the draft of a plan to which other countries, including the Soviet Union, are being asked to give assent in principle—something, therefore, which seems likely to be the main framework round which post-war international monetary policy, and therefore a good deal besides, will be built. Our first feeling on studying it is one, if not of approval, at least of immense relief. The terrible danger that the British Government might be inclined, in the hope of placating the Americans, to endorse the previous White Plan has passed away; for the new plan, even if it is based on the White Plan more than on the Keynes Plan, in matter of form, has drawn the fangs of the earlier proposal. We are no longer threatened with an obligation to go back to an inflexible gold standard which we might find it impossible to maintain without ruin and out of the question to reconcile with a domestic policy aiming at full employment. Our right to pursue such a policy is now explicitly recognised; and provision is made, on Keynes lines, for flexible rates of exchange. This flexibility is, indeed, limited by many conditions; but the great point is that the need for it is admitted, and that it is also recognised as impossible for any reasonable system of parities to be achieved except after a considerable experimental period, during which wartime controls will have to be kept on, or but gradually lifted.

The recognition of this need for flexibility is vital above all for Great Britain, because of the extreme uncertainty about the post-war British balance of payments. No one wants the game of competitive exchange depreciation to start again as a means of stimulating exports; and it is right to introduce safeguards against it. But even more, no one in his senses can want to establish a system so rigid as to be plainly unworkable under the unsettled post-war conditions, and therefore certain to break down. On this issue, which is one of the key issues, we are greatly reassured by the new plan.

The less satisfactory side of it is the scale on which it is apparently proposed to act. The Keynes Plan was designed to give every country a big initial boost towards expansion and prosperity by ensuring that there should be, in the short run, no shortage of funds. The White Plan, and the present plan, are much less ambitious, and will provide a much smaller total of resources. Perhaps, however, this point should not be stressed. If the plan can once be got going on reasonable lines, it will be easier to give it an expansive character than it can be to secure assent to a more far-reaching proposal now. Clearly this plan, as it stands, will not do anything to provide the capital investment needed for European reconstruction and long-term recovery. That is reserved for a second plan, of which the Americans have already put forward a draft. But such a further plan will stand a better chance if the present plan has been accepted and put into workable shape.

Next, there is the point that the present plan accepts the need for controlling and rationing "scarce" currencies—which means, in effect, dollars. It thus recognises the danger that the Americans, though a great creditor nation, may seek to expand their exports without being willing to accept enough imports to balance the account. It provides a means, much more effective than what was proposed in the Keynes Plan, for putting pressure on the "surplus" country. And, finally, the tone of the new plan is conservative enough not to frighten the bankers ("bancor" and "unitas" alike have gone the way of most good ideas on their first appearance), and is yet a step, though only a short one, in the direction of a managed international monetary policy designed to abet the forces contending for a policy of economic expansion and full employment in each country.

THE NO-STRIKE ORDERS

WHAT are Trade Unions? The old-style employer used to argue that they were subversive bodies got up by agitators to interfere with the individual workman's freedom to dispose of his labour as he pleased, and that in the name of liberty the law ought to put them down. Such voices are still heard, especially in the United States and India and other haunts of the goddess of liberty; but among us they are becoming rare. The up-to-date employer, if he is speaking with candour, will be more likely to define Trade Unions as organisations useful for the purpose of disciplining the workmen and preventing them from interfering with the smooth operation of capitalist industry. At any rate, that is what Trade Unionism seems to be coming to, in a highly alarming degree; and the trend appears to have the support of an important element inside the Trade Unions themselves.

No doubt, war justifies many things that would not be tolerable in time of peace; and justifies them most of all at its moments of real crisis. We should be much less disturbed over Regulation AA and the amendment of Regulation IA if we felt able to regard them simply as measures to deal with a particular emergency, analogous to the ban on travel to the coast or the stopping of intercourse with Eire. But it is impossible so to regard them. If it is to be a criminal offence to advocate strike action, why should it be no offence to advocate it in a meeting which has been duly summoned by a Trade Union? Either incitement to strike action is criminal, or it is not: if it is criminal in one place or in one person, it ought to be no less criminal in another. The answer, of course, is that the Trade Union leaders who have endorsed the new Regulations want to have their own hands strengthened against unofficial leaders, and know very well that their hands would be not strengthened but very much weakened if they could be shown to have acquiesced in measures directed against the freedom of official trade union debate. They are afraid, not of Trotskyites—they must know that the influence of the handful of Trotskyites is negligible—but of shop stewards who are their own members and have an influence on workshop opinion which may run counter to official trade union policy. They are invoking the aid of the law to discipline, not a body of outside "agitators," but the very workmen they are supposed to lead and to represent.

This tendency of Trade Union leaders to demand stricter discipline among their followers is not new, or a product of war conditions. That is why we are so concerned about it. A Trade Unionism has become more highly organised, and as the range of collective bargaining has become largely national instead of local, or factory by factory, as it used to be, the control of trade union policy has become steadily more centralised and bureaucratic. Trade Unions have not ceased to be bargaining agencies on behalf of their members; but, seeing at the centre the need to come to terms with capitalism, they have got into the way of striking the best general bargains they can with the employers, and then using the Trade Unions as coercive machines for securing their acceptance by the whole body of workers. To some extent this tendency is inevitable: it goes with the growth of scale and the mass-organisation of capital. But it is highly dangerous; for it steadily edges the Trade Unions nearer to occupying the position of a Fascist Corporative Union or a Nazi Labour Front. It is the Fascist idea that there should be organisation, of the proper sort and under proper leadership, for the purpose of keeping the workers in order and schooling them in obedience to the requirements of the Fascist State. We have not reached that point yet, even under Regulation IAA; but who will deny that we are moving towards it, and were doing so long before the outbreak of the present war?

To confirm this reading of tendencies comes the news that the Ford Company in this country, so long the arch-enemy of Trade Unionism in all its forms, has agreed to recognise Trade Unions under the terms of an agreement negotiated through the Trades Union Congress. With what effect? That the firm has promptly announced its refusal, in view of the new agreement, to recognise the shop stewards with whom it has dealt hitherto. In effect, it seems as if the Ford Company, seeing the signs of the times, has gone to the Trade Unions and invoked their aid to rescue it from a form of workers' combination which they like less, because it is more closely and directly related to what the workers actually want, and has no big stick with which to beat them if they disoblige.

This is what used to be called "Mondism" in the days after the General Strike. It is not Fascism, but it is a kind of Corporativism in which employers and trade union leaders set out to become co-leaders of a united industrial front, and to impose what the Japanese call "co-prosperity" on the mere workmen.

We say all this, not because we approve of wartime strikes, but because we are thinking of the future as well as of the war. This sort of "discipline," imposed under war conditions but in essence a continuation of peace-time trends, will not be easy to throw off if it is once accepted. It may be impossible to throw it off without trade union disruption, as a live Trade Unionism could not grow in the United States until the Congress of Industrial Organisations had challenged the authority of the American Federation of Labour. Our trade union leaders as well as their followers will be well advised to bear this piece of American history in mind. If they set up to be "bosses," how long will it be before a new, rival leadership—of which there is as yet hardly a sign—arises to challenge their authority on a scale which no amount of A's following upon Regulation I will avail to check?

Finally, we say categorically that it is nonsense to attribute the recent wave of strikes to agitators—Trotskyist or what you pleaseist—who can be got at by Regulation IAA. The wave was due to tiredness and frayed nerves, played upon by administrative folly and employers' recalcitrance. You cannot stop that sort of strike by jailing a few people, because it is produced not by agitation but by mass feeling and has no leaders save those it throws up in the heat of the moment. Such strikes can be prevented—or checked—only by giving the potential strikers less cause for them—in other words, by more sense and courage in high places and less Bevinesque bluster about the sacred rights of trade union leaders.

A LONDON DIARY

THE pear blossom hangs heavy like snow, the gardens are ablaze with colour; kneeling down, with my head on the ground, I search anxiously for any barren spaces in the serried ranks of the onion bed. The birds sing as if it were Armistice Day. Then the planes come, obliterating everything in a cataract of noise; Forts, Marauders, Havocs and I know not what passing in great packs on their way to death and destruction. A few of the boys may not come back; some of them I shall see again in the evening having a drink in the pub, playing darts with pride in a new skill and learning shove-ha'penny, to take back to the States after the war. One of them talks to me about roses. Would it be possible to take cuttings back of the different kinds he has seen here and start a rose garden in Kansas? Why not? Another pilot in the train remarks that we do Americans an injustice here; we expect them all to drink a lot and throw their money about, and some are foolish enough to oblige us. They get lit up with beer "because they are used to whisky back home." A few of them give us a wrong idea of Americans; they are not like that at all. No, he never thinks about the target. There is a thrill in bombing; the thrill in doing something you are afraid of doing. It's a job; when it's done he wants to get back to Texas where he has a farm. Then there are some Eighth Army men. One was at Dunkirk. They have all fought in Africa and in Sicily or Italy. Frightful, they say, how these people live. The sooner this next big show begins the better. It's time it was over. They are thoughtful men, tough, and look wonderfully fit. They have really seen war, done what was terrifying and survived. Like the Americans, green troops in comparison, they want to get back to their farms, their work and their homes.

* * *

Ours is essentially a defensive psychology, though it is technically an offensive that we are to begin in this year of blood 1944. If you say this, the more foolish kind of officer thinks the remedy lies in more hatred of the Hun. That is not the way of it. Hatred is incidental; it is no substitute for enthusiasm. I am sure that the Russians now hate the German armies that have destroyed the new cities they have built. But they fight as they do because they hope through fighting to follow victory by achievement. So once did the Nazis. We could have had some such aid to victory, but Mr. Churchill and his friends would not have it so. Liberation could have been a dynamic; it is only a phrase because those who lead us fear the forces that we could liberate. Ours is to be a mindless, necessary, cold bloodshed; even now there is no clear voice from England, no shout of comrades hastening to aid in the desperate battle of the partisan against the cavalry of tank and armoured car. For a moment in 1940 Britain's defiance gave new heart to smothered Europe. To-day our Unnamed Allies may be glad as they listen to the drone of our aircraft, but they are not sure that our controllers of Empire, the allies of kings who have betrayed their peoples to the Fascists, are the friends they once saw in the blitzed cities of 1940.

* * *

Travelling on one of the routes affected by the London bus strike last week, I was struck by the absence of resentment towards the strikers. Only one of my neighbours seemed to have any idea what the strike was about, though they were all talking about it. It wasn't long enough or sufficiently widespread to cause serious inconvenience. It was fun to travel free, and the soldier who acted as conductor on my bus (he was wearing the Africa Star) was happy enough. He told me that he had made over four pounds in tips during two days' work. "A bit of all right this is," he said. "Gives the other blokes a holiday while we makes a bit on the side, see?"

But there was more to it than that. Only six out of eighty-four garages struck—enough to start a strike scare these days—yet most of the busmen shared the same grievances and worked on. An acquaintance who is an official of their union explained. "Our garage felt that as long as some of the men were drawing attention to the trouble, the fewer that came out the better; we didn't want to hold up the factories on the eve of the Second Front." What was the grievance? The new summer schedules meant even more speed-up. Where a crew did five trips before, they now had to do six; there was less time to rest at the end of each and that meant cutting down the driver's safety margin. The "spread-over" system entailed being out sometimes for fourteen hours or more, hanging around at slack times if your home was a long way from your garage. The girls, too, couldn't stand the strain. Twelve instead of five standing passengers was the last straw for them. They all felt they hadn't had a square deal over wages, but they weren't striking over that. And they didn't want people to think it was a political strike. They were prepared to work like niggers if the Second Front required it. The puzzle is the ostrichism of the L.P.T.B. For years now they have had trouble over summer schedules. Perhaps these are drawn up with the agreement of the union leaders, but that doesn't help if they prove humanly unworkable.

* * *

In civilised days it could reasonably be believed that a people who did not resist would not be massacred. The fanaticism of the Nazi persecution of the Jews destroyed this illusion. It is with relief, therefore, that we read reports of the resistance of Polish Jews to the efforts of the Gestapo to wipe them off the map. To die fighting is less horrible than the silent massacres of the Nazi slaughter-houses. We hear now of a small number of Jewish partisans who have escaped to work with the Polish underground movement; of a Jewish strike in the ghetto at Lodz that was large enough, for a time at least, to put a stop to the mass deportations; we hear finally of the resistance of some thousands of Jews just a year ago in the Warsaw ghetto. Tanks and machine guns and finally artillery were used to destroy the remains of the ghetto and the men and women who fought from within their improvised fortress. The Germans are said to have lost 1,000 lives in the battle. How many Jews now survive in eastern Europe? There are still, it is estimated, several hundred thousand Polish Jews who survive out of the original 2½ millions. There are perhaps three-quarters of a million in Hungary. How long it will be before Nazi extermination methods are set on foot in Hungary we do not know. The clearest warnings of the penalties for permitting these horrors in Hungary have been put out by the Allies. Jewish resistance in Poland has at least proved that here is another body of desperate men who, supplied with arms from the Polish underground movement, are ready to collaborate with liberating armies. Those who come through what is probably the worst ordeal suffered in human history will deserve all our aid so that their children may grow up in a world which gives them hope.

* * *

A Parliamentary question reveals that 1½ per cent. of Army recruits in the past eighteen months have been illiterate. The figure (which includes only the totally illiterate, not many who for practical purposes might be regarded as unable to read or write) is large enough to be a nuisance. Quartermasters dislike finding men who have to "make their mark" in receipt for pay and kit, and sergeant-majors become blasphemous when men omit the duties for which they are detailed because they cannot read. More serious are problems that arise in the case of men who cannot communicate by letter with their wives. The War Office, I gather, have seriously tackled this problem. A correspondent has recently visited an Education Centre in an old country house in the Midlands which has been turned into a sort of boarding school, where about fifty soldiers attend classes for six weeks at a time. Most of the illiterates, it seems, were dull or backward at school; few were really prevented by illness or special circumstances from receiving the little bit of schooling that suffices to teach most children to read and write. They had not been in any way deficient; they just needed the individual attention that cannot be given in the criminally large classes still permitted in British primary schools. The Army offers these men a second chance of learning their letters. Some resent the suggestion that they should start school again; they point out that they were all right in civvy street. One had been a house-decorator, an employer of labour. He was persuaded by the argument that he had probably been "done" by business associates in the past and would save money by learning to read the papers he signed. Many of the pupils can read the newspaper at the end of six weeks; almost all succeed after a second course.

* * *

Though Lord Snell began as a farm labourer and ended life as a peer, he was not a Victorian example of the boy who became a millionaire by industry and piety. He made his way by hard work, it is true, but he did not set any particular store, I think, by success or money. He was an unassuming and unselfish person who studied because he wanted to understand and went into political life because he wanted to improve the standards and opportunities of the class to which he belonged. The sturdiest of rationalists, he rejected "revelation," and held that the great religions of the world substantially agree on the basic ethical principles on which man's social life should be founded. I look forward to the appearance of a book which summarises his faith. I understand that he had finished it and left it to be published after his death.

* * *

Pontifex Minor reported last week that hon. Members never find venison on the menu in their dining-room. A correspondent puts her comment in clerihew form:

What, no venison?
Shades of Tennyson!
No wonder they quote us
As eating lotus!

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to A.J.H.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

"I like pin-up girls with few clothes on, because they look better that way, but I would rather it were my own girl friend back home," a soldier wrote to the *Union Jack*.

"I asked her to be photographed the way that pin-up girls are, but when she started to take her frock off the photographer threatened to call the police and ordered her out of the shop.

"Is this the kind of narrow-mindedness we are fighting for?" asked the soldier, who signed himself "Disgusted."—*The Bulletin.*

Brigadier J. R. Rees, consulting psychiatrist to the Army, said that in the Army, too, those people were "problems."

"If the right niche could be found for them they did well, but there were few niches for people of very high intelligence," he said.—*News Chronicle*

War has a little narrowed her social contacts; she has stayed with Queen Mary and with the Duchess of Kent, but it is scarcely possible for hostesses less nearly related to entertain a princess, even a very young and unassuming princess, when Mr. Bevin has confiscated the housemaid.—*Times*

UNDERNEATH CO-PROSPERITY

WHAT is happening inside occupied Asia? little news is coming out, and it is almost clusively Japanese, designed to give the pression that the enslaved continent has now cepted its fate and settled down to willing, if not thusiastic, co-operation with Japan. There is reason to believe that this is actually so. good deal of political and military activity is ing on inside this vast area, above and below ound, and only some of it is going the Japanese y. Rumblings of resistance, sabotage and content can be clearly heard as a persistent dertone to Japanese propaganda fanfares.

Comparison with Europe and its resistance vements is of course misleading. There is tle evidence of an organised underground move- ent in touch with the Allies, and it would be un- asonable and unrealistic to expect one. Political d geographical circumstances are against it. In rope a number of formerly sovereign national tes are struggling to regain their old status. Asia, Thailand alone was a sovereign national te before Japan's aggression; all other areas re forced, strictly speaking, to exchange one m of dependence for another. Motives for istance are, therefore, very different, and rposes and methods vary from area to area, m people to people. Resistance against the panese is not necessarily everywhere identical th assistance to the Allies, just as popular struction of local quisling government is often ly indirectly pointed at the conqueror.

In the Philippines the division is most clearly scernible. There are, firstly, the mixed nerican and Filipino guerrilla bands, scattered mnants of MacArthur's army, who carry on the ht in the mountains and on the less accessible nds. Theirs is a great story. The Japanese ver cease to complain about them, belying eir assertion that they have long been all rounded . The original Japanese claim of May 6th, 42, that all resistance had been finally broken, s modified by a statement from Tokio, on cember 10th, 1942, to the effect that fresh panese troops had been landed on a number of nds to deal with resisting Americans. On ay 29th, 1943, more than a year after the fall of rregidor, Tokio reported that with the rrender of what it described as the "Moro- ttalion of Major-General William Fletcher arp" in Mindanao province, all resistance had w ceased. But it hadn't. On August 6th, 1943, e Japanese claimed to have arrested Lt.-Col. ugh Straughan, of the U.S. Army, a "ring- der of guerrilla units in Southern Luzon"; d on December 23rd, 1943, Col. Mercurio arquez, "leader of guerrilla activities in Amadeo d Pilar," a business-man in civil life, was ted to have surrendered with some of his men. nd so the story goes on.

More than 1,300 guerrillas are supposed to have rrendered in February, 1943, alone. Americans ho stoutly maintain that General Wainwright s never captured but is still directing the fight d is in constant communication with General acArthur, estimate that some 20,000 guerrillas, ilipino and American, are still at large. Guerrilla tivity seems to be concentrated mainly in the rth of Cebu, on the Negros Islands, in Lanao ovince of Mindanao and throughout the Visaya gion, that is, in the heart of the archipelago. cording to the Japanese, these men are organised bands, "besiege whole provinces," dynamite ilway bridges, destroy roads and interfere with panese communications. They are said to ssess "ships," with which they move from nd to island, eluding their pursuers, and panese naval units and aircraft have to be called to deal with them.

A second group are those who have no love r the Japanese and wish to see them driven out d defeated as soon as possible. But they do t wish to have the Americans back. For them ngs have been made considerably easier by the recent American declaration of immediate, full independence for the Philippines. They must represent a large proportion of the broad masses of the people, and the Japanese do not deny their non-co-operative attitude and the hostility with which they treat the quisling government of José Laurel. When in June, 1943, an attempt was made against Laurel's life and he was wounded, the Japanese quickly rounded up a handful of nondescript natives and executed them without pretending that they were the actual culprits.

In the Netherlands East Indies the position is similar. Dutch and native troops, remnants of the defeated garrisons, are known to be active in various parts of the island archipelago. In January, 1943, the Japanese commander-in-chief in Borneo demanded that "we must annihilate our still existing enemy in the island," and that "the restoration of peace must be accomplished during the year." In March, 1943, seven people, accused of "having plotted against the military government," were executed in Macassar, and this is surely only one of many cases which, for one reason or another, the Japanese saw fit to announce. Almost a year later, in February, 1944, the Japanese admitted that Dutch guerrilla troops were still active in South Borneo where, as in Sumatra, they had retreated into the impenetrable hinterland. All over the Netherlands East Indies the Japanese have mobilised Special Police Corps, Vigilance Committees, and Native Volunteer units to combat the guerrillas.

This warfare in inaccessible areas has scarcely much practical effect at the present time, but it compels the Japanese to keep a substantial number of troops stationed in the islands and to carry out "punitive expeditions" at regular intervals. All evidence goes to show that the local population almost everywhere sides with the guerrillas and helps them in many ways. These guerrillas are, of course, loyal supporters of the Dutch government and are working for its return. This cannot be said of Indonesian "collaborationists" who, so far from working underground, are hoping openly for independence from Japanese hands. They claim to be true patriots, as do their antagonists, and the two factions live in perpetual strife which is exploited by the Japanese.

In Burma and Malaya there can be little doubt that the Japanese by their currency policy and efforts to impose conscription have forfeited much of the support they won after the departure of the British. Guerrilla activity in Malaya is believed to be much more extensive than is generally assumed. These guerrillas are, so far as is known, led by escaped British officers and were originally composed mostly of British, Australian and Indian soldiers, and some Chinese civilians. Since the Japanese began, however, to conscript native Malayans for their labour gangs, an increasing number of them are taking to the hills to join up with the guerrillas. Their total is now believed to outnumber considerably the Japanese garrison.

In Burma, guerrillas and saboteurs who have aided the Wingate expeditions come from the hill tribes. Outstanding among them are the Chins and Kachins, the former operating from Eastern Burma, the latter from the North. Between them these bands, numbering many thousands, and fighting in scattered groups, generally without British officers, patrol an admittedly very flexible front of about 500 miles. They are excellent jungle fighters and have worked out a perfect intelligence system which makes it impossible for the Japanese to carry out even minor troop movements without being betrayed in good time and ambushed. The Japanese are, on their own admission, dealing out death sentences right and left to natives "assaulting Japanese soldiers," and people who have "betrayed the goodwill of the Japanese who are defending the population out of compassion and chivalry."

But of all people in occupied Asia it is the Thais who are the most inveterate and passionate obstructionists, grumblers, and passive resisters. They have developed civil disobedience and in particular rumour-mongering (a big weapon among the credulous natives) as a fine art. The Songgram Government is obviously at a loss to know how to bring the people to heel. The official policy that "Thailand must become a great power," and that the population must be increased to 100 million—at present it numbers approximately 16 millions—leaves no impression.

"The Thai Defence Ministry has requested Thai women to enlist as soldiers," said Radio Bangkok in November, 1942, "but so far nobody has enlisted! Thai ladies! Don't forget, you may still send in applications." Or again: "It is impossible for a nation to meet with success when many women are talking rubbish. Thai people are urged to use knives, forks, chairs, and tables, so that Thailand may become a great nation. If we are defeated in matters like dress, by refusing to wear hats, how can we expect to win the war?" It seems that the Thais would rather eat, sit, and dress the way they like than win a war in which they take little interest. The Thais are a shrewd people with a great sense of humour. Premier Songgram, consequently, is a very worried man, and he has threatened more than once "to resign in disgust." Denying allegations that "I hold the Premiership for personal or family benefits," he said in April, 1943: "Many Thais are grumbling at the presence in the Cabinet of certain ministers. But what can I do? I like to engage good ministers, but I cannot find them. When I do find them, there are reasons which I cannot explain why I cannot employ them."

In conclusion, as we survey the evidence of resistance to the Japanese in South-East Asia, one fact stands out. It seems that we have not yet convinced the body of the Burmese and Malay peoples that their national aspirations or economic prosperity will be better cared for if the Japanese are driven out. Resistance to Japan has mainly come from outlying tribes and dissident groups. The task of our soldiers would be made easier by a forthright statement on the Allied side, following perhaps the general line of Queen Wilhelmina's declaration to the Netherlands East Indies, that we are not fighting to restore Imperial domination but are prepared for a "New Deal" in the Pacific.

PETER DE MENDELSSOHN

THE PALESTINE SCENE

JERUSALEM has been described as Heartbreak House; and the latest happenings in the Holy City make that description terribly apt. It is as perverse as it is deplorable that there should be a rift between the English and the Jews, who are equally engaged in a struggle for life, and at a time when the essential circumstances should conduce to internal tranquillity. The country, which for two years seemed to be in imminent peril of invasion, was providentially saved. To the peoples of the Middle East the miracle of Alamein in 1942 seemed as heaven-sent as the miracle of Dunkirk in 1940 seemed to the people of Britain. At the outbreak of the war the Arab revolt, which had harassed the land for over three years, was brought to an end, and since then there has been no Arab unrest. The relations of Arabs and Jews, which had been hopelessly embroiled during the revolt, are, if not completely friendly, at least peaceful. Economic prosperity, in a degree hitherto undreamt of, has been spread amongst Arab and Jewish cultivators and workers in industry. At the same time cultural and intellectual activities have continued to develop throughout the war without interruption. The Jews have thrown themselves devotedly into the struggle, which they recognise to be one for their life. Thirty thousand of them are in the armed forces of the Allies or the local defence forces, and their workers and scientists have made Palestine a valuable arsenal in the Middle East. And yet a feud has broken out between them and the British Administration, between the ruled and the rulers. Only a tiny section have had resort

to violence and terrorism which have shocked opinion; but a tension between the two peoples, resulting from a continuous misunderstanding, has led to a reversal of their natural roles as partners.

It is two years since Jewish feeling was deeply moved by the disaster of the *Struma*, when a ship bearing 1,000 refugees from Nazi terror, who had set out from a Rumanian port, was denied admission to the promised land; and, having been turned back at Stamboul, was lost with all its passengers in the Black Sea. That tragedy, believed to have been brought about by some of the refugees in their despair, affected every family of the half million Jews of Palestine. For scarcely one but had its parents and relations done to death, or in deadly peril in the Nazi clutches. The refusal of asylum, because these refugees were not bearers of Immigration Certificates, seemed a harsh exercise of legalism. On the other hand, the emotional outcry against the Administration which followed aroused English feeling against the Jews; and their relations were bedevilled.

The relief over the common salvation, when the tide of battle flowed away from the Middle East, gave hope that the peoples might get together for the foundation of a better understanding. And some happier moments were granted. Though the Jewish population was distressed by the inability of the United Nations to save the Jews of Europe from extermination by Hitler, and bitterly disappointed by the small apparent results of the Bermuda Conference about refugees, it was heartened in the early months of 1943 by the arrival of 1,000 Jewish children from Poland. After three years of wandering through the Russian Steppes, and after a final ordeal of waiting in Teheran for a permit to travel across the desert, the children were eventually brought through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to the land, and joined 9,000 already saved from destruction who were planted on the soil. The public was heartened again a year later, when a Portuguese ship, the first neutral vessel to sail through the Mediterranean since 1940, arrived at Haifa with another cargo of refugees from Nazi oppression. On the Arab side, the talks about Arab union, which were encouraged by British statesmen, gave a feeling of progress.

Unfortunately, however, the peoples of Palestine are suffering from the strain of eight years' unbroken war. For the World War there was preceded by years of civil strife. So each people sees the mistakes and shortcomings of the other out of a fair perspective; and a vicious circle is constructed. Contravention of the law by the Jews is looked on by the Administration as dangerous and subversive; repression by the Government is looked on by the Jew as a blow and a betrayal of the policy of the Mandate.

The Administration has been worried by the knowledge of an illicit arms traffic carried on both by Arabs and Jews, and believed to be organised on a large scale. The Jews had for years maintained a self-defence movement, and equipped their young men with arms obtained without licence. The grim trials which their settlements, both urban and rural, had endured in 1929, and again in the long-drawn struggle of 1936–39, were adequate motives; and the distrust of the ability of Government to safeguard their homes against sudden Arab attack was not removed by the establishment of a Jewish Supplementary Police. The Government, on its side, could not connive at the arms traffic. The tension was strained to the limit when, last summer, following the conviction of two British soldiers for selling arms, the military authorities staged a prosecution against individual Jews for conspiracy in buying arms. The word "staged" seems appropriate; for the fullest publicity was given to a case which, it might have been thought, would have been conducted *in camera*; and the proceedings, protracted over six weeks, resolved themselves into an attack by the prosecutor upon the Jewish Agency, the responsible body for co-operation with the Government in building the national Home. The heavy sentences which were passed on the accused inflamed the public mind. Searches for hidden arms by soldiers and police in Jewish villages, which had once been wrecked by Arab attack, added fuel to the flames.

That was the position at the beginning of 1944, which, in the uneasy state of suspicion, was envisaged as a year of impending doom. The British Government's White Paper of 1939, restricting the development of the Jewish Home, included three main provisions which were deeply offensive and frustrating to the Jewish people: (1) Immigration was limited to a maximum of 75,000, including refugees, over a period of five years, and thereafter should not be maintained without Arab acquiescence; (2) The transfer of land from Arabs to Jews was narrowly restricted to certain areas; (3) Measures towards self-determination and the ending of the Mandate after ten years were to be inaugurated straightway; and after five years a constituent body of representative Arabs and Jews, with English officials, would be convened. The second object was implemented by the issue of land regulations; but immigration, after 1940, proceeded slowly, and in the five years' period less than two-thirds of the maximum quota had been admitted; while the constitutional project was in abeyance on account of the war. It might have been prudent if the Jews had been silent about the Ides of March—or April—when the five years from the issue of the Paper would be completed, and had waited trustingly on events. But the deterioration of mutual trust was marked by an excitation of feeling. Even when the Colonial Secretary declared last November that the Government did not regard the term as binding in the circumstances of the war, but would allow Jews to enter up to the 75,000, the apprehensions were not allayed. Was not the Government still adhering to the policy of the White Paper as the basis of post-war settlement? Did not the reconstruction proposals of the Administration subordinate Jewish to Arab interests? Counsels of moderation and patience were heard. But an extremist element would not give heed. Influenced by the apparent success of Arab violence before the war, it believed in direct action, i.e., direct violent action. Two series of outrages, one directed against Government property, the other against British Police Officers, gave a shock to security.

Two parties were involved, neither large in numbers. A wing of the New Zionist Organisation believed in blowing up Government offices in order to direct attention to the Jewish claims. Another band, called after a terrorist leader, Stern, who had been killed by the police in 1941, believed in murderous attacks. A number of Stern's followers, who were arrested, escaped from prison and renewed the campaign. Last month came the culminating outrage when, in attacks on police barracks, seven police officers were killed and more were wounded. That has stirred the responsible bodies and the great bulk of the Jewish people in Palestine, which is wholehearted for the Allied cause, to take concerted measures and help the authorities to put down terrorism. What has happened already is grave enough; but it would be deplorable if the frenzy of a section, such as moved some of the Irish at the end of the last war, should estrange sympathy from the constructive effort and imperil the larger purpose.

The future of Palestine seems likely to remain a problem until after the end of the war. As a mandated territory it is the concern, not only of Great Britain, but of the United Nations, and its destiny must be left to their united wisdom. At this moment, however, the breaches in the relations between the Jews and the English need instant repair. To check the spreading of the dry rot in those relations is the first condition of peace and good order, and it calls for sympathetic understanding from the British Administration as well as co-operation from the Jews.

NORMAN BENTWICH

NO REASON NOT THE NEED!

I IMAGINE the most ardent and optimistic planners in the world are the people who go to Monte Carlo with an absolutely infallible system of making a fortune at the tables. The ordinary untidy-minded visitor contents himself with buying a lucky elephant or a ring made from the hairs of an elephant's tail, believing that we live under irrational stars and that the Goddess of Fortune is just as likely to smile on a mascot as on the best-laid schemes of the system-makers. The system-maker, however, holds that the universe, including the roulette-table, is governed by iron laws and that he has only to discover these in order to make the world a better place—at least for himself. And he is convinced that he has discovered them.

All planners are not so optimistic as this, but all of them are optimistic. They believe that, if we eliminated unreason from our life and environment, all sorts of wonderful results would follow. Hence their vehement dislike—to take some trivial instances—of unreasonable spelling, of an unreasonable multiplication table and of unreasonable weights and measures.

One of the unreasonable things on which the planners have for long turned a hostile eye is the Gregorian calendar, with the months cut to different lengths and the first Sunday in January never falling on the same date two years in succession. According to Mr. Oswald Peake, 500 plans for reforming the calendar have already been suggested—a proof that this is a cause which many well-wishers to the human race have very much at heart. The latest of these idealists is Rear-Admiral Beamish, who in a recent speech in the House of Commons, showed himself to be seriously distressed over the present condition of the calendar, which "muddles so many, is inconvenient, irregular, and a source of expense." "The defects of the calendar, we suffer from," he went on to explain—"suffer from" is a phrase expressive of the strong emotion under which he was labouring—"are entirely due to the seven-day week and the fifty-two-week-and-one-day-year and essentially to the odd day, making the calendar irregular, inconvenient and inconsistent." The great aim on which humanity should now concentrate, apparently, is to get rid of that odd day—a spanner, as it were, flung into the works of reason by a Pope or somebody or, perhaps, by nature. Rear-Admiral Beamish, however, does not see much difficulty in the way. "It can be adjusted," he assures us, "with quite a small measure of reason and good will."

Consider what that odd day has already let us in for. "There are," we are told, "four different lengths for the months—28, 29, 30 and 31 days. There are three different lengths for the quarters—90, 91 and 92 days. There are three different lengths for the half-years—181, 182 and 184 days." I confess most of this was news to me, and, if I felt as strongly as Rear-Admiral Beamish about such things, I should probably get to hate that interloper of a half-day as bitterly as he does and should agree with him warmly when he contemptuously remarks: "It seems to me that we should be freed of the absurd rhyme which one is always in trouble to remember."

His own rational calendar will certainly never incite a poet to rhyme. "The twelve months we know so well remain: each quarter begins on Sunday and has three months, thirteen weeks and ninety-one days; the dates of the month will fall always on the same days of the week year after year, perpetually." ("Perpetually" in this connection is a dispiriting word; but let that pass.) "Each month will have 26 week-days exclusive of Sundays. The first month in each quarter of the rational calendar always has 31 days and the other two months in each quarter have 30, so that you have 31, 30, 30 in each of the successive quarters. Even this small measure of variety in the length of the months will not, perhaps, be to the taste of sticklers for absolute uniformity. They will

be inclined to ask on what reasonable grounds January should be given 31 days and March only 30. Rear-Admiral Beamish would probably reply: "Get rid of the odd day and the rest will follow. This is the thin end of the wedge."

His plan for liquidating the odd day seems to me rather like pretending that it does not exist. It could be fitted in, he suggests, between the 30th of December and the 1st of January, and "it would have no date and no day of the week attached to it." Forlorn little odd day, forbidden even the sacrament of christening doomed to a perpetuity of limbo! Rear-Admiral Beamish, it is true, does not bid us leave the day entirely nameless. "We could," he says, "call it any name we liked, and every country could have its own name for the particular day. It could be a Freedom Day, or a Humanity Day, or a Brotherhood Day." In other words he would allow us to call the odd day whatever we liked, so long as we did not call it the 31st of December. "Whatever it might be called," he generously adds, "it certainly could, and should, be a universal holiday." A holiday? The Festival, I should call it, of the Massacre of an Innocent.

At first, I thought that, in his passion for planning, Rear-Admiral Beamish was about to abolish the present names of the days of the week, and give them numbers instead like the streets in New York. For did he not say: "There is one thing about the seven-day week which we can usefully remember, that is, that it still retains the names of the pagan gods or of the sun and the planets—a nice mixture." That sounded ominous, but my fears were set at rest when I found that he regarded the present names of the days and months in the calendar as "beautiful old links with the past." He admits that September, October, November and December are not really the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months of the year, and that it is unreasonable to name them as if they were. But he holds that we have "cherished associations" with these names; and the rationalist, turning sentimentalist for the nonce, shows more mercy to the months than he shows to the odd day.

The Beamish plan, which seemed so progressive to its author, was, to his obvious surprise, denounced as reactionary by Mr. Austin Hopkinson. "To suggest that a thing is good because it is rational," said Mr. Hopkinson, "is to attempt to dam back the whole spirit of the age and put back the clock. The spirit of this age is irrationality in all human activities—the revolt and reaction against the rationality of the nineteenth century." He produced as evidence modern sculpture and painting and the works of James Joyce and other writers, "who are gradually producing a formless literature which has no meaning of any sort or kind, but is simply a jingle of words." He did not explain how a really up-to-date planner could set about reconstructing the calendar in the modern mode of *Finnegans Wake*. The Rear-Admiral was clearly dumbfounded by the turn the argument had taken. "Do I understand," he gasped, "the honourable Gentleman to suggest that anything which is rational is retrogade?" "It is, most certainly," replied Mr. Hopkinson boldly. "It is against the whole spirit of the age." The record of this exchange is enough to make anyone a friend of Hansard for life.

Without endorsing Mr. Hopkinson's heroic paradox, I may say that I think it is unreasonable to push reason too far. Consider how the French shopkeeper has his ability to count atrophied as a result of the adoption of the apparently rational decimal system. An Englishman, having had his mind trained by struggling with a ridiculous system of pounds, shillings and pence, can make out a bill in half the time required by a Frenchman. The decimal system, while making things superficially easy, makes them, in practice, difficult. After all, walking on ice ought to be easier than walking on a cinder-path; but we know from experience that friction in moderation, instead of being a hindrance, is a help in walking. Take again, the question of simplified spelling. To learn to spell English words in the present irrational way is an education in itself. Remove the difficulties of spelling, and the child, unused to pit its wits against the traps set for it by an unreasonable use of the alphabet, will grow up with the muscles of its memory weakened, and will be as unhappy in its fate as a child who has never been allowed to walk uphill. "The fascination of what's difficult" is a good Yeatsian phrase. Let us not withold this fascination from our children and grandchildren. The only modern concession to over-simplicity that seems to me commendable is the use of the 24-hour clock. I do not like it, but in a stupidish world it prevents some serious mistakes.

As for a rational calendar, I should as soon think of trying to rationalise the map of England, making all the counties exactly equal, with straight lines for borders except along the coast. It is only in new countries that we get those straight lines dividing state from state and province from province, and how appalling they look, dulling the coloured world into soulless Euclidean shapes! It seems to me that Nature counsels a certain amount of irregularity and that it is more reasonable to follow Nature than to pursue a purely mechanical ideal of reason. After all, one of the most reasonable things that were ever invented was the bed of Procrustes. Let us not subject our beloved months to so rational a mutilation.

Y. Y.

L. H. MYERS

Novels had their heyday before the war, teeming at so headlong a rate that the terms of criticism became rubbed coinage. Where the standard was generally high, even prentice fiction boasting knack of construction and choice of the lively topic, it was the vocabulary of praise that wore out. The title of genius grew cheap, and of the books that bore it few remain in the memory to-day. But in the case of L. H. Myers' *The Root and the Flower* the warmth of welcome was justified; those who read it are not likely to have forgotten it. Yet the occasion of its author's death, and the rise of a new generation of readers suspicious of yesterday's judgment, may permit a reassertion of its merit.

All Myers's work had distinction. He wrote with a painstaking slowness, not visible in the quick action of his plot and his essential readability. But with these went the impression that he had completely extracted the juice of his subject, directing its surprises towards an inevitability of conclusion. His first book, *The Orissers*, though at superficial reading very near a thriller, probes strange depths of conscience and, for all its apparent disorder, moves with the step of fate. Its queer intensity, its modern Elizabethanism, may well keep it alive. *The Clio* and *Strange Glory* are gay, with something of Firbank's dancing fantasy in slower motion. Competent, and still novels of ideas behind their veil of elegance, their chief interest lies in displaying the versatility of the author of *The Root and the Flower*.

This may be read as a rousing historical novel of India in the days of Akbar. It has plenty of incident, played out by a host of varied, well-defined characters. The severe archæologist might cavil at details of local colour, but as a picture of India at the peak of its classic civilisation *The Root and the Flower* should be the compulsory study of all who have a finger in the country's government. It is still, however, something more than a grand exotic canvas. Engrossing as are the young Rajah's experiences in a web of intrigue and sometimes violent episode, the book's true significance lies in his spiritual rather than his physical adventures.

For, with all its extraneous attraction, it is an achievement in a form rarely practised with success—the philosophic novel. Rabelais made an epic fairy-tale of it; in France it is usually tilted towards satire. Here, with an historical background as a useful device of perspective, it has assumed more serious guise. The ancestors of *The Root and the Flower* are *John Inglesant* and *Marius the Epicurean*, though they explore fewer alternatives of faith and bring their heroes safely to port.

To a traveller in search of spiritual truth, Akbar's India contained almost boundless opportunities of selection, including Christianity. Myers's hero comes in contact with their prototypes, discusses with them desires eagerly to find, and fails. The failure is as conclusive as Montaigne's "Que sais-je." It is not so much an assertion of doubt as a recognition of infinite possibilities; the discovery that, while the seeking yields so many riches, choice, which implies so much refusal, is the error.

The Root and the Flower was followed by *The Pool of Vishnu*, which was a sequel rather than a continuation. Using the same protagonist and many of the same characters, it shows the hero confronting the problem of human relationship and, having found love, renouncing it. But, with something of the same turn as in *The Root and the Flower*, renunciation is itself the fulfilment, or the completion, of desire. It is a book closely akin to *La Princesse de Clèves*, with whose moral it coincides, though from the masculine point of view. Exquisite in colour and workmanship, it yet presents a particular case, with given circumstances, and does not pretend to the wide sweep and application of *The Root and the Flower*.

Though in neither of the Indian novels is pursuit crowned by capture, or any mechanism of "the happy ending," they leave an exhilarating impression. Interwoven with the thread of the story, glowing through the artistry of the phrase, runs an appreciation of life and a curiosity in its purposes. A few meetings with Myers sufficed to show how much the humanist element in the work was a reflection of its author. A rather constrained, military air swiftly warmed with a smile. A certain intimation of wide experience at once turned to wonder and eager inquiry when any novelty of fact or idea presented itself. He encouraged, rather than led, conversation. One felt that he enjoyed good restaurants, the internationalism of hotels and liners, but that his system of starring was based on an exacting scheme of selection of his own. From that scheme also came his liberalism of thought, ardour for justice, and sympathy in contact.

T. W. Earp

MURDER IN THE THEATRE

While we were floating up the moving staircase of the Tube, past framed advertisements of plays, my companion remarked how many were about murders. To mention only those the titles of which recur to me at once, there were advertisements of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Ten Little Nigger Boys*, *Murder for a Valentine*, *Guilty* (a translation of Zola's *Thérèse Racquin*), *The Rest is Silence*, and *Uncle Harry*. I should have thought," she said, "that in times like these. . . ." "Ah," I said, "clearly you've never read Professor Stickluft and Herr Bestrebung. In four massive volumes these researchers, whose inexorable persistence is only matched by the audacity of their psychological penetration, have collected from the literature of every age, clime and country, evidence in favour of this thesis: that in Man, not only the Unconscious but the Conscious, not only the Ego but the Id, may be attracted by scenic presentations or printed descriptions of crime, violence and suffering. To prove this they have not only ransacked ancient, modern and renaissance drama (hazarding the conjecture that *Macbeth* might lose in compelling power if there were no murders in it), but also centuries of even forgotten fiction. But you look staggered—sad? If you're saddened, perhaps, by the thought that we could ever entertain unfriendly feelings towards a race capable of producing such men, or are perhaps suffering from a national inferiority complex, I can relieve you. Overwhelming in bulk as this evidence undoubtedly is, no cautious mind could accept such a thesis on such grounds alone. And it was our Dr. Beady, who, by inventing a method of recording the heart-beats of dogs, brought it within the realm of certainty. He found, in 98 instances out of 115, that if dogs were strapped within sight of two of their kind fighting, or of another dog being severely thrashed, the acceleration of their hearts. . . ."

"Oh, do shut up," she said, "Let's *go* to one of these thrillers." So we went to three.

I imagine *Guilty* at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, to be a considerably altered version of Zola's play. Possibly in some respects even an improved one, though there have been also serious losses. I agree

with my fellow-dramatic-critic, Mr. Agate, that the French petty bourgeois atmosphere evaporates at Hammersmith (Zola was attempting romantic tragedy in a mean, realistic setting), and that Gallic virulence has vanished from the characters themselves. When first produced, this play was abused and hailed as the extreme example of remorseless realism on the stage. But in truth it is only a literary and melodramatic presentation of adultery—murder ending in lurid remorse and a double suicide. *Thérèse Raquin* was made by Zola out of one of his early novels. These were not the product of his genius. That genius, as *L'Assommoir*, *Germinal* and *Le Débâcle* were to show, lay in his handling of huge co-ordinated themes, in his presentation of mass movements and mass impulses, and occasionally (recall the garden in which the Abbé Mouvet wandered and dreamt), in poetically hallucinated pictures. Such a talent has nothing to do with the stage. When Zola dealt with individuals apart from environment, he was apt even at his best to become crudely sensational. In *Thérèse Raquin* there was only one good dramatic invention: that the witness to the lovers' guilt should be a paralysed old woman, a dumb woman, who can only speak hatred through her eyes, till triumph at last enables her to regain speech. Miss Farebrother, though far too amiable a Mère Raquin, has a remarkably expressive pair of eyes. I found *Guilt* sensational rather than moving.

The Rest is Silence at the Prince of Wales' is not a good play. But, with the exception of the first act, it is effective. It suggested the kind of entertainment which will compete successfully with the popular novel once Television is perfected and as cheap and universal as the radio to-day. As my readers probably know, it presents the story of Madeleine Smith, a girl who in the 'fifties in Glasgow was accused of poisoning her lover, a young Frenchman below her in social station, was in all probability guilty, but escaped penalty under the Scottish verdict, "Not proven." It is as much a spectacle as a sensational drama. As such it is likely to be popular and run, run, run. Mr. Black and his collaborators make the most of crinolines and period costumes, also of lighting effects. He has sacrificed the time which a real dramatist would have spent in psychological preparation, so that we might *understand* his heroine better, to presenting her home-environment. Mr. Black even compels us to listen to a drawing-room song on the occasion of a New Year's Eve party at the Smiths. Madeleine Smith was probably what we now call "a split personality"; one who completely forgets what he or she normally feels and values when in a particular environment. We are all liable to this dichotomy. But if the shutter dividing our lives into compartments is absolutely opaque, we become pathological cases. Under the persuasion of her parents and of her own good sense, Madeleine became engaged to a kind, well-to-do elderly man. Her secret lover then tried to blackmail her by threatening to show her lustful letters to her father. Though she no longer loved this man passionately she continued to behave as if she did to stop him. Meanwhile, as the respectable young lady, "Miss Smith," she openly purchased arsenic and had it put down to her father's account at the chemist's—nominally to destroy rats, but, as she confided to her school-friend, who accompanied her, to improve her complexion: But as the trapped mistress of an unscrupulous lover, she also unconsciously bought it to use—in case! Being confused between two separate worlds, she did not remember that, even should she prevent her lover *himself* using those letters against her, they would inevitably be found after his death and prove her to be the person most interested in it.

Most of the play is taken up by her trial. Here the evidence of witnesses is given partly verbatim and partly in the form of "throw-backs," that is to say by re-enactments, during partial black-outs of the Court, of the scenes in which those witnesses took part.

All these are well acted and so are the lawyers (easier). Miss Ann Todd transmits both the attractions and odd composure of the heroine. The play closes with a phantasmagoria in which all the characters concerned are supposed to address her, speaking out of themselves. The defects of *The Rest is Silence* are due to superficial psychology. Dramatic interest is subordinated to immediate scenic impressiveness.

On the other hand, *Uncle Harry* at Garrick's Theatre excels in penetration. It is worth seeing more than once. It is good, not superficial, drama. THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION has already published praise of the actors and actresses who interpret its situations and characters to perfection. But that note did not, in my judgment, do justice to the play itself and to its theme. A poor play may be redeemed in patches by a remarkable performance; but the acting of a main part can never salvage a whole play. And when every scene proves pointful and moving it means that the dramatist deserved great credit. His interpreters have had only to study the text to know exactly what they should do, to produce the right effects.

I cannot recall a play which made me understand so well how a particular type of man might be led into committing a murder. An interesting type, too, and one who would suffer the tortures of the damned afterwards; a man who might have been a genuine painter in spite of his pitiable weaknesses, had not his domestic predicament and social surroundings made him desperate. On how wonderfully Mr. Michael Redgrave turns himself into such a human being I will not expatiate—from his spectacles (marvellously handled) to his feeble walk, his ghastly sympathy-provoking smiles, and winning intonations. Nor will I dwell upon the vampirine possessiveness of his vigorous sister Lettie, who is as openly egotistical as he is superficially self-effacing, and whom Miss Beatrix Lehmann impersonates to perfection. But in the acting of the smaller parts, in his ugly hysterical sister Hester (Miss Ena Burrill), in the sensible kindly commonplace Lucy (Miss Rachel Kempson) whom the wretched Harry loved, every playgoer will also note a similar perfection. And not only in them, but even in those figures who convey the *milieu* of the tragedy—the barmaid, the Quincy's servant, Lucy's fiancé, the glee singers and the hangman. The author, Mr. Thomas Job, supports them all throughout, giving them at every moment the telling thing to say and do.

The motive of the universally patronised and despised Harry's crime is to rid himself of his two possessive sisters, whose competitive devotion to him makes them loathe each other and his life insupportable. His method is to take advantage of their notorious quarrels to poison one and fix suspicion on the other. He succeeds, his well-known popular amiability aiding, but in vain, in vain. Harry's doom will be worse than Letty's who is to swing—and triumphantly she knows it.

DESMOND MACCARTHY

THE MOVIES

"Pygmalion," at the Leicester Square
"The Hour Before the Dawn," at the Odeon
"A Guy Named Joe," at the Empire

The new films may have nothing striking to show, but there is a crop of revivals. Besides *Pygmalion*, which we are all invited to comment upon, I notice that the following films can be seen in the West End: *The Gold Rush*, *French Without Tears*, *My Universities* (Part III of Gorky's Life), and *La Bête Humaine* (American version); while further afield Sherlock Holmes, in the flashing person of Basil Rathbone, again faces death. Not so bad, though I could wish the habit of reviving were persistent and discriminating. London still misses, at one end of the scale, a determinedly highbrow cinema, and at the other a general sprinkling of old favourites: with Chaplin back, what about Mae West and W. C. Fields? At any rate, *Pygmalion* is here, as lively as the day it was made. No dialogue on the screen has ever been able to touch Shaw's. Here is a theme as well as a story; the prehistoric tea-parties and receptions are realised with an acidity which can bite to-day in a talkie palace as it did thirty years ago in the theatre; Shavian ideas, the Shavian battle of the sexes, strike afresh almost brutally. The notorious adverb? Well, not so bloody quaint if you ask me, but there's no harm in pretending otherwise. Wendy Hiller does the scene beautifully; one can echo Freddy's "Do it again!" and understand why he fell in love on the spot. Eliza seems to me a more touching figure on the screen (I have memories of Mrs. Pat Campbell), and the influence of the camera, supposedly so impartial, has been to render all the characters more human. Howard and Asquith and no doubt Shaw himself have made the intimate adjustments necessary; there is some loss of speechifying, perhaps, of that pouring out from the magnum that dizzies audiences in the theatre; but the rest—speed, animation, fantasy—is gain.

Neither of the new films scores more than a half-way success. Of the two I preferred *The Hour Before the Dawn*, which at least has a Somerset Maugham novel in the background and starts by being solid and exciting. Franchot Tone is a conscientious objector whose beliefs are respected in a family that goes in more for partridge-shooting and piloting. It takes marriage with an Austrian, who turns out to be a spy, and whom he murders, to hoist him, at the last moment, into the air where all brave men ought to be. The spy is Veronica Lake: just watch her sneer, as she sits in the family circle listening to a Churchill speech! It's surprising no one finds her out sooner—if not as a spy, then as a Hollywood actress with an accent never dreamt of before. However, though *The Hour Before the Dawn* only raises conflicts in order to shirk them, it has some merit as a thriller.

Without Spencer Tracey *A Guy Named Joe* would be pretty bad. He gives, as so often, a performance of real distinction, this time as a pilot who crashes and then comes back to haunt aeroplanes and the girl he was in love with. The spooky business is all very matter-of-fact; there is wise old Lionel Barrymore sitting up in the skies with four rows of ribbons and directing ghostly strategy; and except that they aren't supposed to be seen or heard, the *revenants* seem as round and matey as anyone else. But if this film is meant to be comforting—as I suppose it is—the heavenly quarters might have been made a little less chilly.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

Leicester Galleries

Besides being memorial the Morland Lewis exhibition at the Leicester Galleries is the record of a tragedy. In his fortieth year this serious and sensitive artist was just beginning to speak for himself. The influence of Sickert on his earlier work, though in many ways admirable, had been somewhat oppressive. Here we see a dozen small water-colours (paintings in gouache and chalk to be exact—of which *Nos.* 53 and 55 are good examples) which reveal a personal and expanding talent. Probably they will come as a mild surprise to gallery-goers, who would be glad to know just when they were done: one recalls nothing quite like them in pre-war exhibitions. They make us realise that when, almost a year ago, Morland Lewis died in Africa, British art lost more than the sincere painter and sound teacher whom we had known and respected.

Walter Taylor also is here commemorated. Taylor was that rare thing a collector of taste, blest with an unearned income, whose sympathies did not freeze stiff in middle life. On the contrary, his judgment matured. Brush in hand, he was never more than an amiable amateur; but this collection of his pictures, pleasant enough in itself, has provided Mr. W. J. Turner with an opportunity of writing a charming appreciation of his old friend.

Here also are some thirty characteristic works by Cedric Morris.

SONG

If this town should tumble down
No one would be sorry.
We'd take to the fields
And have our meals
Of bracken and prickly holly.

If these spires should once be mired
In rubble dust and water,
We'd sail like ducks
Past all the clocks
And gaily shop by barter.

If we should lack a cloth to our backs,
Huddled in earth together—
The life of man
Is quickly spanned
And earth goes on forever.

AUDREY BEECHAM

Correspondence

RE-EDUCATION OF GERMAN PRISONERS

SIR,—Your correspondent's article on this subject is a very timely reminder of what may turn out to be one of the reasons why the peace after this war can be lost. We, who intend to go back to defeated Germany and help with the task of bringing the German people to its senses, are already dreading the days when train-loads after train-loads with hundreds of thousands of 100 per cent. Nazis will return—fresh from British and American P.O.W. camps. Indeed, they will be the only 100 per cent. Nazis left in Germany after their repatriation, and for all practical purposes of World War III a highly efficient nucleus of Fascist mentality will have been preserved, thanks to some misunderstood "loyalty" to an obsolete international agreement designed for quite other purposes.

I have come across a copy of the *Lagerwacht*, the weekly news-sheet produced by the British Government (to be correct: the Foreign Office) for the benefit of the German prisoners in this country, no doubt in compliance with some international agreement. I was amazed to see that what the British Government (and at the British taxpayers' expense) is giving the German prisoners, consists of:

(1) News items from the D.N.B. (Nazi news agency) on the war situation;
(2) Commentaries from Nazi newspapers and radio stations, on the military situation;
(3) Nazi news from Germany on S.A., S.S., Nazi leaders' and Nazi organisations' activities;
(4) Promotions, decorations, sports events, speeches, social events and obituaries, straight from the Nazi press;
(5) "*Feuilleton*," puzzles, etc., from Nazi papers.

There is not a single news item, commentary or other contribution from Allied sources. German prisoners are, by the strange will of the British Government, still kept in the darkness of Nazi propaganda.

Surely, if there is some international agreement that Britain should not influence her enemies behind barbed wire by democratic propaganda, there cannot be a clause forcing her to feed those wretched prisoners with the Nazi poison!

I do hope that the subject of the re-education of German prisoners will receive the serious attention it deserves, and I should like to congratulate you on your opening move which, without doubt, will start the necessary discussion. F. G.

"A POLICEMAN'S LOT"

SIR,—After two and a half frustrating, tortuous and mentally degrading years in the Metropolitan Police War Reserve (I was invalided out in 1942) I cannot endorse too strongly the words of "War Reserve" in your issue of April 15th. Never have I worked with a body of men so consistently miserable, so irritated by petty officialdom and so powerless to help themselves. Regular officers living only for the distant day when they may retire; Auxiliaries trying vainly to exist on (in those days) £3 a week. £3 a week whether he be a bachelor or a husband with six (or sixteen) children.

Two important points were overlooked by "War Reserve"—they have a bearing upon his grievance and should, I think, be added to it.

(1) Regular police officers are granted a weekly rent allowance as well as their pay. War Reserves have no such allowance.

(2) It is, of course, a major crime in the Force to accept tips or bribes. Can you humanly blame a man who is serving his country and striving to maintain some sort of social stability for his family (totally impossible on salary alone) if he degenerates into a scheming money-grubber? I am still paying off the debts I was forced to accumulate between September 1939 and the summer of 1942.

"EX-C. DIVISION"

THE PRICE OF A WIFE

SIR,—The Bible says it is beyond rubies. In the Marriage Service, the husband gives all he has. In law, she is worth her keep.

I want the position regarded as a partnership, to which the ordinary laws of partnership would be applicable on dissolution, property acquired by either party during the marriage being regarded as joint partnership property. I regard the so-called Common Law rights of the father to the children, the fruit of the marriage, in the bearing of which the woman has had by far the most onerous part, as utterly antiquated. And I uphold the Guardianship of Infants' Act, 1925, which clearly intended that the welfare of the child should be the sole guiding factor in matters of custody.

The price of a wife must, according to the present-day law, be regarded in a more ancient and medieval manner by a Divorce Court Judge when he assesses damages against a co-respondent. I believe that general opinion to-day feels that the whole idea of damages for the loss of a wife is retrograde. It has the effect of making any conscientious woman, who, for instance, has been deserted by her husband, apprehensive of being seen out with any decent man for fear that he might be dragged into the Courts as a co-respondent by her husband for mercenary gain, or sadistic revenge. It thus leads to a process of blackmail and social injustice, which is completely unjustified by results in preserving marriages, and operates in a purely one-sided manner between the sexes. If there must be damages, why not damages also against the woman who seduces a married man. The whole thing is a ridiculous survival, if it were not so tragic, of the days when a woman could be bought and sold in the market place. Mr. Justice McCardie, whose tragic death at a comparatively early age, bereft the nation of her foremost reforming Judge, in dealing with a divorce petition, said that the description which the husband gave his wife in order to secure damages for her loss as being "a good housekeeper, industrious and clean," was one which it was customary to give a domestic servant.

He added, "In arriving at damages, a good deal depends on the value of the woman, and you have to assess her as you would assess the value of a slave in the East. To my mind, it is one of the most unfortunate aspects of the divorce law of this country." Actually, the method of assessment of her value is largely based upon decisions in the middle of last century, and damages awarded to wronged husbands on this basis range from £10 to £10,000.

To a Government considering legal reform of the law regarding married women, it may well be that the suggestions of Mr. Justice McCardie, now nearly a quarter of a century old, are mature enough for consideration.

"First, it seems to be clear that the position as between husbands and wives and third parties calls for reconsideration by the law in view of the new status of married women. Secondly, the rights of a married woman to form her independent friendships and enjoy her own amusements can never be solved by the law, but must be determined by the standards of loyalty, of courtesy, and of good sense; and, thirdly, that the comfort and happiness of married life rest not on statutes or decision, but on matters that lie beyond and above the realm of law."

AMBROSE APPELBE

BASIC ENGLISH

SIR,—Mr. Lawrence Wolfe takes the discussion of Basic English on to the ground in which it should have been argued from the beginning. The shortcomings of Basic as a literary instrument are interesting enough, and there is much good fun to be got from the study of its clumsy and inadequate periphrases and circumlocutions, but that would be irrelevant if Basic could do what its inventors claimed for it—teach foreigners to speak English, or something like it,

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JONATHAN CAPE

more easily and more quickly than they would otherwise do. That is the only decisive test, and on that test, as Mr. Wolfe points out, it fails. One could add others to the reasons given by Mr. Wolfe for believing that nobody who had ever attempted to teach a language could possibly have invented Basic. It is founded on three demonstrably false assumptions :

(i) that languages consist of words and are learnt by learning words. In fact, they consist of groups of words, varying in meaning and in shade of meaning according to context and expressing or partly expressing ideas or groups of ideas. No dictionary has yet succeeded in delimiting the semantic content of the words of one language in terms of those of another. Learning a language means learning not what words mean, but which words can comfortably live together.

(ii) that the process of learning words is made easier if it is made more analytical. That if (say) Mr. Wolfe's Czech is asked to reduce the semantic content of a Czech word to its simplest elements, he will then find it easier to learn and remember English equivalents of those elements and to assemble them into the appropriate Basic circumlocution. This is plain nonsense. Every language teacher has long since discovered that semantic analysis is the last thing that even the best student learns. A cursory examination of Basic vocabulary will reveal a great number of what Professor Hogben, in his exposition of his own brilliant but futile international auxiliary, calls "semantic rag-bags." The conclusion seems to be that Mr. Ogden has not yet learnt to do what he so confidently (though implicitly) expects of his pupils.

(iii) that when the learner turns to the synthetic part of the process just described—when he begins to build his basic periphrases—the simplest method is the compounding of the smallest possible number of verbs with the greatest possible number of prepositions. This is the most insular of all the concepts underlying this would-be world language. It is claimed that it makes it more easily learnable by foreigners. It may be that this is true of the Japanese, for whom (it is said) Basic was invented : it is certainly untrue of the romance and germanic language-speaking groups, who comprise nearly 300 million of the world's population, including our nearest neighbours and best customers. It is untrue because the preposition is the most fluid and unreliable element of any language, with meanings varying endlessly in accordance with the linguistic company it keeps. Anyone who cares to consider the changing meanings of (say) the word *up* in compounds like *turn up, pull up, get up, give up, take up, work up*, and so on, will observe, not only that each has more than one meaning, but that the preposition itself has a dozen meanings, some almost indefinable. Even foreigners already very familiar with English continue to be troubled by our prepositions. It should be noted, too, that romance-language speakers are wholly unfamiliar with these synthetic forms and find them confusing, while germanic-language speakers are familiar with them, but in forms in which the value of the preposition is different from that of its English equivalent. In German, *to let oneself down* (sich niederlassen) means *to set up* (in business, etc.) ; *to come down* (niederkommen) means *to be confined*—and so on, almost endlessly. Since Basic English is intended to be and must always remain an auxiliary language, into which the speaker translates, consciously or unconsciously, from his native tongue, it is clear that the unsuspecting germanic language-speaker who embarks upon it will soon find himself in the midst of a whole minefield of pitfalls and booby traps.

All this does not mean that Basic English cannot be learnt. It does mean that pure and reasonable English is at least as easy and much more useful.

Wembley, Middx. W. PICKLES

R.A.M.C.

SIR,—The picture drawn in the article "The Road Back" of medical organisation, is, I am convinced, no longer typical or topical and therefore misleading when published in an April issue of your periodical. Further, such a picture may occasion unnecessary anxiety among parents, wives and friends of soldiers on the Italian front.

At the beginning of the year, as a result of a motor-cycle accident in a base area in the Italian theatre, my leg was badly fractured. After a few weeks in an excellent general hospital I was evacuated to England from an Italian port. Throughout the whole of the journey by ambulance, hospital ship and train the medical attention and R.A.M.C. organisation was good, with little or no overcrowding nor arriving at ports with no preparations made.

After arrival at a dispersal centre in England, the organisation was civilian, which though kindly in its intention was not so efficient as that of the R.A.M.C.

My experience would possess no value if it were not confirmed by the experiences of the dozens of my bed companions in the hospital ship, train or dispersal hospital. Most of these companions had come from front line fighting and had wounds of varying severity.

The average British soldier gives his testimony of praise to Army organisation grudgingly, especially to such branches as the R.A.M.C. When he does give such testimony, it may be assumed that it is genuine.

A SOLDIER IN HOSPITAL

FRANCISCO BORÈS

SIR,—When under Plays and Pictures in your April 15th issue I read about a painter with the threatening name of "Bores" who, according to your critic, was not "a born painter" (like Moynihan in the adjoining room) but had "adopted the modern idiom not because it is the idiom in which he can best say what he has to say, but because it is modern" and who is therefore "unconvincing"—little did I think when I read that that the reference was to the charming and delightful Catalan-Parisian artist *Bor-ès*, best known to English art-lovers perhaps for his unrepresentative but talented contributions to *Verve*.

Since then, however, I have been lucky enough to pay a visit to the Redfern Galleries—with the result that I am in no doubt whatever that the boot is on the other leg. Moynihan is essentially a derivative, if gifted, painter whose exhibits (with the exception perhaps of the *Nude* listed as No. 1 in the catalogue) lack weight, substance and above all, just the quality which your critic alleges to be missing in Borès, to wit, inevitability of style. A painting by Moynihan which one had not seen before might be good or bad, but only a wizard or clairvoyant could with positive certainty attribute it to Moynihan. A painting by Borès, on the other hand, is a painting by Borès. To say about this painter that he paints in an idiom alien to his talents is to say the most false and foolish thing one *could* say about his work, for such little masterpieces as *Panier de Cerises, Enfant sur un ane* or *Le Dernier Souper* show the post-Picasso just how the vexed "modern idiom" should be wielded, that is with a concise delicacy, an incomparable decorative *flair* and a truly Latin wit. I am surprised that any competent critic could so dismiss the gay felicity of such an obvious talent. GEORGE RICHARDS

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

I ONCE tried to explain why the egotistical book—the autobiography or the first person singular in print—can be either the most charming or the most infuriating form of literature; and I still think that the explanation was right. The reason is that it is true to say to every man what Kipling's fat German said to the enraged orang-utan: "There is too much ego in your cosmos." Our own egos always seem to us extremely big and those of other people extremely small, and the writer who talks about himself has to face the difficulty that his ego, so infinitely important to himself, will seem infinitely unimportant to everyone else. He can overcome that difficulty only if he treats his own ego without pose or pretence. If he does that, however gigantic his "I" may seem to him, and insignificant to us, he may, like Pepys, succeed in immortalising it in a book. On the other hand, the egotistical writer exasperates us if he not only overestimates the size of his ego, but lets us see that the minute, ridiculous speck in the centre of him is also a sham.

In judging writers and persons, this absolute and relative size of the "I" is of great importance. The rarest of all people and of all writers are those whose egos appear almost as big to other people as they did to themselves. One of these people was Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy. There was nothing insignificant about him, not even his "I." Instead of a minute, ridiculous speck he had in the centre of him something really gigantic, hard, and formidable. It produced *War and Peace;* it gave a peculiar quality, not merely to everything which he wrote, but even to every trivial thing which other people record about his behaviour and his conversation; it made him during his life lovable but impossible to live with, fascinating but terrifying. And after his death it made him one of the most difficult and dangerous subjects for a biographer. There have been plenty of biographies and they are nearly all interesting, simply because it is almost impossible to write about Tolstoy's life and character and not be interesting. Yet none of them is first class or even satisfactory. The subject is too complicated and too simple, too fascinating and too formidable for the biographer. It is not Tolstoy, but only disjointed sections of him which you get in Birukov or Aylmer Maude. It is significant that you get much more of him in informal records of his conversation and reminiscent sketches, like those of Goldenveizer and Gorky. There is more of the real Tolstoy and of real understanding of him in Gorky's reminiscences probably than anywhere else. Gorky must be read with circumspection and even scepticism. It is clear that there was something in him and still more in his writing which was antipathetic to Tolstoy, and there was much in Tolstoy which exasperated Gorky. Yet somehow or other Gorky managed to get a clear vision of Tolstoy's terrific complexity and simplicity and to convey it to others in writing, producing in the process his only masterpiece, even if it be a minor one.

Tolstoy has once more been too much for his latest biographer, Mr. Leon, who has already to his credit a good novel and a painstaking book on Proust. Not that his book* is without merits—it has many. It is painstaking and honest; it contains most of the biographical material necessary for an understanding of Tolstoy; it wisely draws a very great deal of that material from Tolstoy himself, from his books and his diaries. It makes a serious attempt to analyse and interpret all Tolstoy's important works and views, and Mr. Leon does this intelligently, if rather laboriously. Yet I do not think that Mr. Leon has or conveys a clear vision of the complete Tolstoy; he gives us a picture in which each feature has been meticulously copied from the life, but which is nevertheless not a portrait. He makes a mistake which is common to nearly all biographers; he treats his subject, both the man and his work, too solemnly. Every human being, even the greatest, even a Tolstoy, is ridiculous, a mass of absurdities, littlenesses, and contradictions, and the greatest are those who do not attempt to hide, who are prepared to laugh at their own absurdity. Tolstoy himself was one of these. At Yasnaya Polyana it was a custom of his and the rest of the family to write down during the week any thoughts which might occur to them, and these were read aloud to the whole party on Sunday evening. Tolstoy wrote a *Bulletin of the Patients at Yasnaya Polyana Lunatic Asylum*, which included the following self-portrait:

> No. 1. L. N. Tolstoy. One of the harmless sort. The patient is subject to the mania known to German doctors as *Weltverbesserungswahn*. His hallucination consists in thinking that you can change other people's lives by words. General symptoms: discontent with the whole existing order of things; condemnation of everyone except himself, and irritable garrulity quite irrespective of his audience; frequent transitions from fury and vexation to an unnatural and lachrymose sentimentality. Special symptoms: busying himself with unsuitable occupations, such as cleaning and making boots, mowing hay, etc. Treatment: complete indifference of all surrounding the patient to what he says; occupations designed to use up all his energy.

Mr. Leon quotes it, but his biography would have gained enormously if it had been imbued with some of Tolstoy's devastating irreverence for Tolstoy:

What made Tolstoy, as a man, so different from other men and, as a writer, so different from other writers was his tremendous complexity combined with an extraordinary directness and simplicity. Nearly 60 years ago Matthew Arnold, in a very intelligent appreciation of the two great novels, and in particular of *Anna Karenina*, pointed out that Tolstoy's power as a novelist consisted in his "great sensitiveness, subtlety, and finesse, addressing themselves with entire disinterestedness and simplicity to the representation of human life." Tolstoy's "great sensitiveness" was due to his possession of a mass of intellectual and emotional antennae incredibly sensitive to his own and other people's thoughts and feelings. Most people who are hypersensitive in this way have little or no power of analysis, for the emotional temperature of the one activity is inconsistent with the cold objectivity of the other. But Tolstoy's soul was perpetually performing the spiritual antics of Hegelian dialectic; inconsistencies and contradictions were nothing to it; the opposites were magisterially synthesised. He could combine, both as man and artist, an icy, objective analysis with the white heat of personal passion and that delicate emotional warmth necessary for the intuitive understanding of what is going on inside the minds of other people. So the "subtlety and finesse" were added to the "sensitiveness" and the combination enabled him to give to the characters of his novels a depth and reality, a complexity and simplicity, so perfectly "true to life" and achieved so perfectly by no other novelist.

But his many-sidedness did not end there. To this extraordinary power of understanding the human mind and soul by both intuition and analysis were added two other powers. The most realistic of the realist novelists of Zola's or our day cannot compare with Tolstoy in sensitiveness to the material world of sights, sounds, and smells, in "observation" of such facts, and in power of translating them into words. Hence the material world in which his characters move and live is as vivid, as simple and direct in its impact upon us, as the world which I see when I look out of the window at this moment. "You'd much better not put the plaster on," he said to Gorky in criticism of Gorky's *The Lower Depths*. "Your language is very skilful, with all kinds of tricks—that's no good. No tricks, please." If you are a Gorky, you cannot write without tricks, but if you are a Tolstoy you have no need of tricks and, at the same time, it is just because you have no tricks that you are Tolstoy. His other power was again entirely different. He had a very powerful intellect, a very fine instrument for "abstract thinking." I know that to-day Tolstoy the thinker is out of fashion; most intelligent people dismiss his social, philosophical, and aesthetic views as superficial and cranky. I think that they are wrong. I disagree myself with fifty per cent. or more of everything which Tolstoy has to say about God, society, and art. But though he seems to me to be continually wrong-headed, I cannot see that it is possible to deny that only a very fine intellect could have produced the reasoning in "What is Art?" or in the mass of his "serious" books and pamphlets. And I find that even where he appears to one to be most cranky, even where you disagree most profoundly with him, it is never safe to dismiss what he says as just nonsense; over and over again the nonsense—and it is nonsense—is superficial and negligible, but within it is a kernel of truth which one is loath to admit, but which he has dug down to by sheer power and honesty of thinking. This is the case, I think, with his views on government, pacifism, and even art. I wrote "even art," but perhaps one should say "particularly art." For nowhere is the combination of apparently absurd wrongheadedness with profound understanding so striking as in his casual remarks and serious works about literature, painting, and music. The remarkable essay on Maupassant is a very good example.

The explanation of Tolstoy the man is the same as that of Tolstoy the writer. And his personal life and personality cannot be ignored as they can be, and perhaps should be, in the case of most great artists or thinkers. The tragedy of his marriage was played out appropriately in public, for it had a universal, almost a cosmic, significance like the story of Oedipus or the crucifixion of Christ. There were in him a dozen different human beings, many of them inconsistent or contradictory, and all of them built on a gigantic scale. That, no doubt, was what made it possible for him to write *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. But, as a man, he was never able to do what he succeeded in doing in those books as an artist—perform the Hegelian antics and reconcile or synthesise the contradictions. This was partly because, in order to be universal, he had to be a sinner, the Great Sinner on the Tolstoyan scale. His sense of sin was profound, even from his earliest days, as one can see in the Diary for 1847-1852, but he was also and always profoundly sensual. The only satisfactory way of reconciling sensuality with a sense of sin, with the belief—which Tolstoy has eventually—that all pleasure is wrong, is hypocrisy. He had a streak in him of the Great Hypocrite as well as of the Great Sinner, but was too cynical and sceptical, and too great a man, to adopt that kind of solution. Hence the perpetual war within him which went on until death ended it at Astapovo railway station. It was this war of irreconcilables which made him the lonelist of men, "terribly homeless and alien to all men and things." And alien not only to all men and things, but—what was still more important—alien to God. For perhaps the bitterest fight within Tolstoy was between the great believer and the complete sceptic. This accounts for his extraordinary attitude towards God which often appears in his books on religion, but still more often in records of his conversation. Gorky in one place says that he hated God. This is an exaggeration, but there is a story, told by him to Goldenveizer, which shows that he took a malicious pleasure in the idea that "God too makes mistakes." Probably Gorky gets nearest to the truth when, in another place, he says: "With God he has very suspicious relations; they sometimes remind me of the relation of 'two bears in one den.'"

LEONARD WOOLF

* *Tolstoy, His Life and Work.* By Derrick Leon. Routledge. 25s.

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WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT

Carteret and Newcastle. By BASIL WILLIAMS. *Cambridge University Press.* 15s.

Possibly the greatest pleasure in reading Professor Williams's meritorious study in eighteenth-century politics is his modesty. When we climb into his chariot and saunter through the undulating country of Whig oligarchy we are left to ourselves to cogitate and compare. Occasionally he draws up to point out some interesting feature in the landscape enriched by his research; otherwise we hardly know he is on the box. The reigns of the first two Hanoverian sovereigns are particularly suited to this detached treatment. The political and religious frenzies of the previous century have abated and the Kingdom is not yet racked by the moral issues of the franchise and social legislation. It is as if a precipitate had been cast into political life and politics had dissolved into their bare essentials: the art of gaining and maintaining power, of governing and administering. It is because Professor Williams's skill in composition and clarity in exposition are so great, that, as we follow the fortunes of a brilliant political failure and an absurd political success, we are able to pause and reflect on the nature of politics itself.

Serenity is the quality which Carteret above all possessed. Nature had showered gifts on him, lands, wealth, wit, happiness, generosity, high spirits and an admirable intellect. As a young man of under thirty he conducted most tortuous diplomatic negotiations in Sweden with resounding success. In their course he displayed those talents which marked him as a politician of unusual ability: he was firm, he was patient, he sympathised with the scruples and difficulties of the other negotiators. It was then that the fascination of foreign policy laid hold on him and he conceived it to be the duty of every English statesman "to knock the heads of the Kings of Europe together and jumble something out which may be of service to this country." He returned in glory, became Secretary of State for the South in Walpole's administration and plunged into fresh diplomatic toils, aspiring to a life of renown.

Politics are, however, full of disagreeable realities. Carteret's very brilliance, his ability and determination to take a line of his own, aroused in his colleagues jealousy and fear. It is not enough to perform one's duties better than any other man in the land. One must either control a party or make oneself indispensable. Newcastle, no more than Walpole, could talk German to George I as Carteret did; but he made himself indispensable to Walpole. In common with Carteret he had been to Westminster and the university, and both were devoted to their wives—there all resemblance ended. Fussy, vain, knowing nothing of politics but sure that he did, of a miserable intellect and a ridiculous presence, good-natured Newcastle understood, however, the first art of politics, that of securing votes. He delighted in elections, banquets, conciliation, influence: "I love a mob. I headed a mob myself once. We owe the Hanoverian succession to a mob" he exclaimed delightedly. It is perhaps a pity that Professor Williams did not show more fully how he achieved this success; for as Namier has shown the Duke could nominate only twelve seats in the House of Commons. Back-benchers of those days were not as docile as those of the last twenty years, and in any age men are not entirely dominated by cupidity and the prospects of political and social advancement. On the most unaccountable issues, majorities dwindle; oratory, gusts of political emotion, fortuitous occurrences awake in the most supine of party hacks vague stirrings of uneasiness and resentment. The maintenance of political support is a most difficult and ardous pursuit and is not to be despised by those who do not possess it.

Newcastle possessed it because, like all great politicians, he would have agreed that "the relentless and ruthless pursuit of power is the only abiding satisfaction to a man." Before Carteret was fully aware, Newcastle had ousted him and he was sent as Viceroy to Ireland. He was astoundingly successful; and on his return went into opposition against Walpole. Yet though nearly all men of parts were opposing Walpole, they remained a set of individuals without cohesion, inconstant in policy, a pack of factions. At last in 1742 Carteret acceded to Walpole's place. Hardly bothering to inform his colleagues of whom Newcastle was one, he swept abroad to Dettingen and Hanover to knock the heads of the Kings of Europe together. Our prestige soared . . . and yet would a more hard-headed and stolid man, not so enchanted by the intricacies of the game, have fallen into the mistake of neglecting the rise of Frederick of Prussia? Carteret's summer lasted for two glorious years. By then the indispensable Newcastle, encouraging the prejudices of the Commons, intrigued him once more out of power.

And then a strange change overtook him. He retired into private life, to friends, burgundy and books. If he spoke in the Lords it was to abolish Scottish Heritable Jurisdictions or to rhapsodise over the excellence of English herrings. He used his power of speech not to convince but to make the House laugh. He had always enjoyed the civilised pleasures too much to be a pre-eminent politician. It was more pleasant to read Demosthenes than to entertain ill-bred Members of Parliament. The combination of scholarship, humour and a cultivated mind is fatal to political ambition. To be the friend and patron of philosophers, poets and scholars, of Voltaire and Fénélon, seemed now to be of surpassing importance. What was the use of power?

"I had thought I had cured you of such offers. I will be hanged a little before I take your place rather than a little after," he wrote Newcastle when the latter pressed him to become the head of the government. Far better to read the classics. Bentley had been his friend; indeed, so prodigious was the noise of Bentley reciting Terence according to the true cantilena of the ancients that his mother had reproved him for encouraging the old clergyman to get drunk. Now it was he who got drunk: he took to the bottle in earnest. It was indeed a positive handicap when the Council met at midday before he had a bottle inside him. At last, bent almost double, worn to a skeleton, he quite lost the use of his legs and dozed the days away. It was too great an effort to study the preliminary articles of the Treaty of Paris: he lay back sublimely quoting Homer. A few days later "he died at Bath, previous to which he was delirious, and imagined himself in the other world, where, meeting an old Clerk of the House of Commons, he gave him an account of all that had happened in the interval between their deaths, with infinite wit, accuracy and humour, insomuch that it was a pity it was not taken down."

Professor Williams closes this entertaining study, written in such an agreeable style, with Horace Walpole's epitaph on Carteret. He might equally have chosen Walpole's *Memoirs* in which, comparing Carteret with Chatham, Mansfield, the Duke of Cumberland and his own father, he wrote that he

> was most a genius of the five, he conceived, knew, expressed whatever he pleased. The state of Europe and the state of literature were equally familiar to him. His eloquence was rapid and flowed from a source of wit, grandeur and knowledge. So far from premeditated, he allowed no reflection to chasten it. It was entertaining, it was sublime, it was hyperbole, it was ridiculous, according as the profusion of ideas which crowded from him. . . .

The innermost secret of politics had escaped him; but in grandeur and nobility he had caught life.

Newcastle did not long survive him. Cast off by George III, his income reduced in the service of the Hanoverians from £40,000 to £6,000, disdaining a pension, he retired bewailing the ingratitude of man. But though the author tries to extract a tear from our eye, we remain stony-hearted. For over thirty years the Duke had held high office. All good things come to an end. Why should one weep when ignoble public servants are finally discarded? For indeed he had broken his cardinal rule for success; he was no longer indispensable.

NOEL ANNAN

POWER AND PERSONALITY

The Poisoned Crown. By HUGH KINGSMILL. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 9s.

Is there really any generalisation of psychology or philosophy which links the careers of the cautious and peace-loving Queen Elizabeth, the psalm-singing, cavalry leader Oliver Cromwell, the calculating and insatiable Napoleon Bonaparte, the noble and tormented Abraham Lincoln? Mr. Kingsmill has written very readable essays on each of them. Oddly enough he is at his best in discussing Lincoln, with whom at first glance his rather cynical and very conservative mind would seem to have least in common. His Elizabeth is somewhat colourless and commonplace; there is nothing here to surprise the reader who is familiar with Neale's biography or other standard sources of reference. His Cromwell is more energetic and opinionated. He writes: "In effect, whatever his conscious intentions, Cromwell was a hypocrite, that is, a man between whose precepts and whose practice there is a wider gap than can reasonably be allowed to the weakness of human nature." He gives a number of incontrovertible examples. Cromwell did, in fact, talk about the Irish as unfortunate and oppressed people, suffering from oppression, and express these sentiments a few weeks after he had, in true Hitlerite style, exterminated the whole population of Drogheda and begun "his merciless settlement of the Irish question." Mr. Kingsmill can also cite occasions on which Cromwell's mind seemed to hover between trusting God and giving Him the glory and keeping his powder dry and relying on nothing except his owh ruthless efficiency. But this is characteristic of the Puritan in arms; as the instrument of God's will, why should he not find in the success of his own activities proof that the right would prevail? Mr. Kingsmill may well be right in seeing in Cromwell the instinctive man of action and born soldier who was capable of finding God's will in any cause with which he chanced to be connected. As it happened he represented the Puritan gentry whose rising power was frustrated and outraged by the bad government and religious opinions of Charles the First. Napoleon, Mr. Kingsmill's next choice, was also a genius of restless ambition. Mr. Kingsmill finds at the end of both their lives a deep futility; Cromwell died fearing assassination, unloved now that his great roaring voice and formidable passion ceased to command obedience, while Napoleon spent his last years building up his own legend, dreaming always of conquests he did not achieve. "Even on St. Helena, or perhaps especially on St. Helena, in those days a port of call for ships sailing for India, the East still magnetised his imagination, the vast futility of his career having left him with no other regret than that it had not been yet vaster and yet more futile."

Futile? How far is that word justified? Neither Cromwell nor Napoleon achieved what they desired. But both put themselves at the head of great social changes that were taking place in their day. Both were clever enough to harness these revolutions to their own ambition. In Napoleon's case this process was conscious; where he may well have been surprised as he looked at the fruit of his labours was that his defeat hastened the democratic process, which he had exploited and despised, more than any victory he had won in the name of democracy. Cromwell, less calculating, was also the unconscious tool of forces he seemed to lead. The revolution brought, in fact, the victory of Cromwell's class over the King in spite of the apparent setback of the Restoration; it never for a moment was near

achieving that "victory of the saints" which followed so logically from Cromwell's utterances and which so deeply shocked his common sense and his sense of property when men like Lilburne tried to put the saints on the throne.

The question whether Lincoln achieved his life's work or failed is equally interesting. He believed, as Mr. Kingsmill insists, that in the progress and unity of the United States lay the chief hope of mankind; it was the profound conviction of a man who made up his mind slowly. Lincoln hated slavery, but Mr. Kingsmill fairly reminds us that he was always uncertain on the point, worrying about the actual inferiority of black people. Where he had no doubts was that the purpose of God would be thwarted if the Union was disrupted, and it was because he was a man of wide mind and understanding charity that he worked so hard at the end of his life for a fair and unrevengeful peace. If Booth's bullet had gone wide of its mark, Lincoln might have succeeded at least in moderating the passions that went so far to making sterile the unity that he won on the battlefield. In any case Lincoln belongs to the category of those great men who have consciously willed a good object and never been a slave to the lust for power. Lincoln stands at the opposite pole from Napoleon.

Many such reflections arise as I read Mr. Kingsmill's pleasantly written biographical sketches. I can imagine an interesting introduction discussing and comparing the use each of these figures made of their opportunity of power. But Mr. Kingsmill's introductory chapter defies rational analysis. To criticise it in detail is as easy and unsporting as to take pennies from a blind man. All I need say is that it is called "Genealogy of Hitler," and begins with Rousseau, whose philosophy was based on the assumption of human goodness, which it is the point of Hitler's cynical view of common people to repudiate, and goes on by a series of inconsequential jumps to include a figure as incongruous as Mr. Wells, one of the great champions of the rational school of human progress, the final destruction of which is the avowed object of Nazism. At first I thought Mr. Kingsmill's point was to illustrate the dictum that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," but no one, as Mr. Kingsmill shows, could better illustrate triumphant resistance to this corruption than Lincoln. At one moment Mr. Kingsmill's thesis seems to be that power divorced from religion is necessarily bad, and that this tendency can be traced from the Age of Reason to Hitler. But this cannot be his intention since Elizabeth and Cromwell both lived before Rousseau. Cromwell was a conspicuously religious man who, like St. Bernard, Hildebrand and the Eminence Grise, was a remarkable example of a "power politician." Or if Mr. Kingsmill just wishes to show that power does not accomplish that which it seeks, Elizabeth would seem a good example to refute the thesis. I have read and re-read the introductory chapter without seeing any point in Mr. Kingsmill's references to Rousseau, Neitzsche, Dostoievski, Balzac, Wells and Hitler. Good incidental remarks make some atonement for this inconsequence. The best passage is his explanation that Charlie Chaplin as the Little Man, despised and rejected, bears the same relation in the popular imagination to Hitler, as Byron, romantic and dead, had in his day to Napoleon. There are a number of such suggestive remarks in this book and even in the introduction. They are, I think, all that Mr. Kingsmill has to give; he has nothing really to say about the fascinating problem of the relation of power to character and historical evolution. Mr. Lytton Strachey was more cunning when he captured the public imagination by biographical writing; he just called his book "Eminent Victorians" and left it at that. Mr. Kingsmill should rechristen his book "Four Important People."

TOM PAINE

OPIATE

Planet and Glow-Worm. A Book for the Sleepless. Compiled by EDITH SITWELL. *Macmillan.* 6s.

Charming title, and the ascription will draw many whose sleeplessness requires a more subtle drug than sominol. For some weeks now I have been taking Miss Sitwell's tablets; they soothe, they insinuate a thread into one's dreams and working hours. Tethered to a queue perhaps (how these off-moments are beginning to add up!), I con a newspaper story about mediums and ghosts, and remember Miss Sitwell's ghost (Aubrey, *Miscellanies*) which at Cirencester in 1670 disappeared "with a curious Perfume and a most melodious Twang"; another, on the same or the next page of *Planet and Glow-Worm*, after delivering an important message, "gave a Frisk, gathered up and vanished." The species, to judge from recent reports, has degenerated. Then—this bus of mine, I suppose, is never coming—memory slides over a fragment from *Bussy d'Ambois* ". . . Silently gliding exhalations, languishing winds, and murmuring falls of water . . ." to come to rest on Gérard de Nerval, whose *Les Chimères* is one of the focal points of Miss Sitwell's anthology. The mysterious perfection of those sonnets is difficult enough to seize while one is reading, and almost impossible for a slippery memory to hold. However, I manage, round one unforgettable line, to build a quatrain:

> Je suis le ténébreux—le veuf—l'inconsolé,
> Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie:
> Ma seule étoile est morte—et mon luth constellé
> Porte le soleil noir de la Mélancholie.

Five sonnets of the twelve have been chosen by Miss Sitwell. Their magic, in a book nine-tenths English, suggests the spell-binding of Coleridge, if in *Kubla Khan* he had brought to "pure poetry" a deeper integration; what exactly is the import of *Les Chimères*, it may not be easy to explain, but the stress, so lacking in Coleridge's opium-trance, is indelible. Here, visions of mythology and the antique have a personal impress; they are, not divine accidents, from which the poet can be snatched away by banging doors, but a final revelation. Other products of poetic madness—a flower-piece from Christopher Smart's *Rejoice With the Lamb*, and Blake's Little Cloud and Clod of Clay talking—have their place in Miss Sitwell's anthology. A distraction like Ophelia's, but more elaborately tuned, goes singing past the well-ordered walks of Burton, Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne. This is a book of the garden, of moonlight, music and lovers, flowers and trees, winds and odours, with an occasional excursion into the sunlight or the desert; and when this background recedes, the words themselves weave garlands and spin spells.

The Nerval sonnets are followed in *Planet and Glow-Worm* by Mallarmé's *Tristesse d'Eté*; a natural and happy conjunction, as elsewhere poems of Donne and of Baudelaire will be found side by side. Not only does the second poet follow naturally on the first and bring intangibilities nearer, but it is by such ties that Miss Sitwell has transformed a selection of favourite pieces into a book of strongly individual appeal. I have been looking for the word which will link these pieces together: "mood music" perhaps is as good as any. The kind of music varies. Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé exhale one mood; Shakespearean passages, beautifully chosen,

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another; these predominate. There may not seem much in common between Baudelaire's lover listening to the mournful drip of the fountain and Lorenzo and Jessica in the shadow of moonlight; between *Rêve Parisien*, with its crystallisation of beauty and silence, and Desdemona's "The poor Soule sat sighing by a Sicamour tree . . . " as Emilia smooths the sheets; but each is an incantation and stretches a moment to eternity. All that Miss Sitwell gives us of love is the rapt or icy reflection, of tragedy the lull before the storm. The spell's the thing. So we are pinned down, like Gulliver, with skeins: Herrick litanising the smells of flowers, and Burton prescribing juices to cool the face; a Nō play, a fluttering scena from *Finnegans Wake*; Blake, the *Song of Solomon*, Christopher Smart; Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus* (how many have read this?) and *Ecclesiastes*; Skelton, Keats, Rémy de Gourmont, Ben Jonson, Marco Polo. Few of the extracts are more than a page in length, and the whole book, comprising eighty odd pages, has been exquisitely and harmoniously filled. The reader who begins dipping here and there in *Planet and Glow-Worm* will end by reading it backwards and forwards half-a-dozen times.

Several longer passages—Gower's *The House of Sleep*, for example, and the night piece from *Cymbeline* beginning "The crickets sing, and man's ore-laboured sense Repairs it selfe by rest"—had already been chosen for analysis in Miss Sitwell's *A Poet's Notebook* (Macmillan) and the criticism there, and especially the remarks on "texture," will increase our pleasure in these passages, besides throwing a light on Miss Sitwell's sensibility as a critic.

Planet and Glow-Worm is a difficult book to particularise; but even its smallest lights seem to belong here and nowhere else. I enjoyed some touches in Mandeville's report on Ethiopia:

> In that Contree ben folk that han but O foot; and thei gon so blyue that it is marvaylle; and the foot is so large, that it schadewethe alle the Body azen the Sonne, whaune thei wol lye and reste hem. . . .

and, especially, the following two lines from George Peele:

> God in the whizzing of a pleasant wind
> Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees

—a pearl that, in finding, must have cost a mountain of discarded shells.

G. W. Stonier

NURSERY DETECTION

There Was an Old Woman. By Ellery Queen. *Gollancz.* 8s. 6d.
Jack-in-the-Box. By J. J. Connington. *Hodder & Stoughton.* 8s. 6d.
Night's Cloak. By E. R. Punshon. *Gollancz.* 8s. 6d.
Leopard Cat's Cradle. By Jerome Barry. *Boardman.* 7s. 6d.
The Rat Began to Gnaw the Rope. By C. W. Grafton. *Gollancz.* 8s. 6d.
The Crimson Cat. By Francis Grierson. *Eyre & Spottiswoode.* 8s. 6d.

What is the affinity between nursery rhymes and detection? From the present vogue of titles borrowed from nursery rhymes it looks as if there would soon be enough material for an American to write a post-graduate thesis on the subject. I believe the fashion was started by Mrs. Christie, who likes to weave her webs of deception round the most childishly simple plot. With other writers, whose original ideas are on the verge of exhaustion, I suspect that they are snatching up the familiar dramas of fairyland, because, under the pretence of parody, they feel entitled to develop them along the most surrealist lines they can imagine. Take the latest Ellery Queen, *There Was an Old Woman.* This old woman has made a fortune in the shoe trade; so to commemorate her success she plants a gigantic statue of a shoe, illuminated at night with neon lighting, in front of her residence. She has two husbands and six children—three too many. The extinction of the superfluous three provides Ellery Queen with that sequence of murder which most detective writers require to eke out 175 pages. With the passage of time in the Queen *ménage*, the Inspector has become a nincompoop, Sergeant Velie a knockabout buffoon, and Ellery himself an addict to feminine charms. Yet in spite of all the foolery and shoe nonsense I must admit that the detective substratum is sounder and more carefully worked out than in any other book in this list.

Jack-in-the-Box sounds infantile enough, but the title is only a playful description of Mr. Connington's latest murder method. Fortunately the method is too cumbrous for everyday use by detective writers, so I trust we shall not meet with it again: the description of the apparatus involved requires far too many pages. Four deaths, complicated by air-raids, provide Chief Constable Sir Clinton Driffield with a puzzle. Neither method nor motive is at first discoverable, so he should be puzzled. Only Sir Clinton adopts the Holmes attitude of omniscience throughout—to make his Watson and the reader feel more of a fool, I suppose. Sir Clinton's manner is very wearing; the wartime characters seem completely disintegrated; and the solution is not at all difficult, once there is a clue to the motive. One of the deaths is highly ingenious, however, and the book is worth reading. But Mr. Connington would be far more readable if he never diluted his brilliant inventions until they lose all their flavour.

Night's Cloak is the nineteenth of the Bobby Owen series; and I should say Bobby never had a more complex case to unravel. Mr. Punshon's method is to twist any number of people's private lives into a tangle, tie a knot for murder in the middle, and set Bobby to pick out the particular thread that leads to it. The process is laborious, but thorough. In *Night's Cloak* a business magnate is knifed intestate in his study, at a particularly awkward moment for his relations, with whom he has quarrelled; his business associates, whose views he has opposed; and all the women he has been making love to. One clue, unearthed by Mrs. Bobby Owen, particularly pleased me. What does the lady's hat mean?

Leopard Cat's Cradle and *The Rat Began to Gnaw the Rope* belong to the American type of wise-cracking thriller with detective angles. You take a hunch on the killer at the start and hope to see your candidate head the field in the home stretch, without much confidence. The scene of action in *Leopard Cat's Cradle* is the metropolitan night-club world; the narrator a bar-tender; the leopard cat a cheetah; the crimes the strangling of a glamour girl's admirers. The cat's cradles are string figures attached to the bodies to confuse the issue and introduce a note of erudition with a few illustrations. *The Rat Began to Gnaw the Rope* is subdivided into 65 chapters on 160 pages to show the jerkiness of the events it describes. As the narrator, a young lawyer elucidating the affairs of Harpers Products Co., is wounded or semi-conscious in some ten of the chapters, a more consecutive account of five murders could hardly be expected. Both books are slick and readable; but the idiom is overworked.

The Crimson Cat is a moderate English thriller about leakage of official secrets from a Government office, *not* in wartime.

Ralph Partridge

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No. 743

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The usual prizes are offered for 16 lines from an epistle of Pope's on a Tour of London's Lunch-time Activities As Advertised in The Daily or Weekly Press. Entries should reach this office by the first post of Monday, May 8th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 740

Set by Fred Oyster

We offer the usual prizes for the five epigrams (in prose) about food.

Report by Fred Oyster

The days of good food, like Shelley's soft voices, vibrate in the memory. There were fewer complaints and regrets and more stoical good sense than might have been expected, with so delicate a topic. Three competitors, it seemed to me, succeeded in producing a satisfactory set of five epigrams, for which they get a prize of a guinea each. They are Stanley J. Sharpless, R. J. P. Hewison and R. S. Jaffray. A second prize of 7s. each to V. H. Friedlaender, E. W. Fordham and William Bliss. A selection from other entries follows.

PRIZES

When the shadow of Austerity darkened the English kitchen, it caused us less dismay than it did other races; our good plain cooks had been flirting with it for years.

From the soggy, the gritty and the lease-lent, good Lord deliver us.

The gourmet and the merely protein-conscious will always sit on opposite sides of the table.

The banana still casts its ithyphallic spell over our darkling memories.

The Yorkshire Pudding is perhaps our most characteristic contribution to the art of good living.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

A distinction without a difference: like bread and sausage.

The English have forty-seven different kinds of cheese: they eat none of them.

The Frenchwoman succeeds at cooking in spite of her materials, the Englishwoman in spite of herself.

Like all serious subjects, food should be treated with a light hand.

If one did not live to eat, one could not eat to live.

R. J. P. HEWISON

A brain capable of appreciating good food usually goes with a stomach too old to enjoy it.

Even the ascetic takes salt.

Apepsia can, it seems, be a public virtue.

The two classes of mankind are those who seek an appetite for their breakfast and those who seek a breakfast for their appetite.

The sanctity of despising food comes near to the hypocrisy of denying life. R. S. JAFFRAY

SECOND PRIZES

The better the day the longer the queue

What's in a name? The sweetest sound in the housewife's ear is "Offal."

There is always just a chance of fish, unless the B.B.C. promises it.

One man's meat is another man's chicken.

Apprentices to-day would give anything to sleep under the counter. V. H. FRIEDLAENDER

A French menu covers a multitude of English sins.

It takes a world war to convert an egg into a shell egg.

It is easier to catch a fish in the sea than in a queue.

The tails of oxen appear to have been among the heaviest casualties of the war. E. W. FORDHAM

The truth of the adage—"the proof of the pudding is in the eating" depends entirely upon whether the eater is a good judge of pudding.

The man who says that "enough is as good as a feast" proves clearly that he has never feasted.

I agree that "good wine needs no bush"; but, all the same, I do rather like to see the brand of the Chateau on the cork. WILLIAM BLISS

Nature was niggardly in the matter of food when she gave us only sufficient appetite for four meals a day and a few odd snacks. A. H. LEGGOTT

The hungriest diner is the worst carver.

DOUGLAS HAWSON

Good food, although it stimulates conversation, is never obtrusive.

English food is judged as a biological necessity.

Food in tabloid form would be like knowledge without wisdom. FRANK SPOONER

A discriminating palate is as little an average possession as an artist's eye or a musician's ear.

Food is the universal bribe; it is understood by all and has an appearance of good will.

H. S. MURRAY

Feeding is very well; but there is always a rational point beyond which one must not go.

Un oeuf is, nowadays, as good as a feast.

LITTLE BILLEE

No gourmet has ever had any stomach for revolution.

D. W. BARKER

If spiced ham is called Spam surely dried eggs should be called Dregs . . . EDWIN ACROBAT

The best food is wasted on the best talkers.

Hunger is no qualification for an epicure.

It is just as vulgar to serve up one dish to resemble another as it is to paint a wooden fireplace to look like marble. If the nature of the dish makes disguise necessary, it is an insult to one's guests. In food, as in other things, honesty is the best policy.

TOWANBUCKET

Caviare like bread is unrationed and needs no coupons. SIR ROBERT WITT

"Surely they can do without pudding in war-time," said the Mayfair hostess on learning of the Indian rice famine.

The gourmet has done wonders for the oyster; he has persuaded us to accept gelatinised sea-water as food for the gods.

You do not condemn a Stilton when you call it rotten. LESLIE JOHNSON

A self-styled epicure who would let his hot lobster get cold whilst he argued that *à l'Americaine* was a corruption of *a l'Armoricaine*. CEGNYE

The potatoes were less flowery than the gravy which was, if possible, more watery than the greens.

D. C. LING

Soup. To-morrow it will be clearer.

H. M. HULME

"Bread is the staff of life." True: the trouble starts when you try to use the staff of life as a stick for labour.

The average Englishman takes two things for granted: the goodness of his women and the badness of their cooking.

Our problem is not so much how to eat our cake and have it, as how to have our cake. I. C. SAUL

It seems only fair that in the Red Army caviare should be issued to the private as well as to the general. N. B. SEVERN

There are no bones to pick with a good fillet.

I. DRAZIN

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